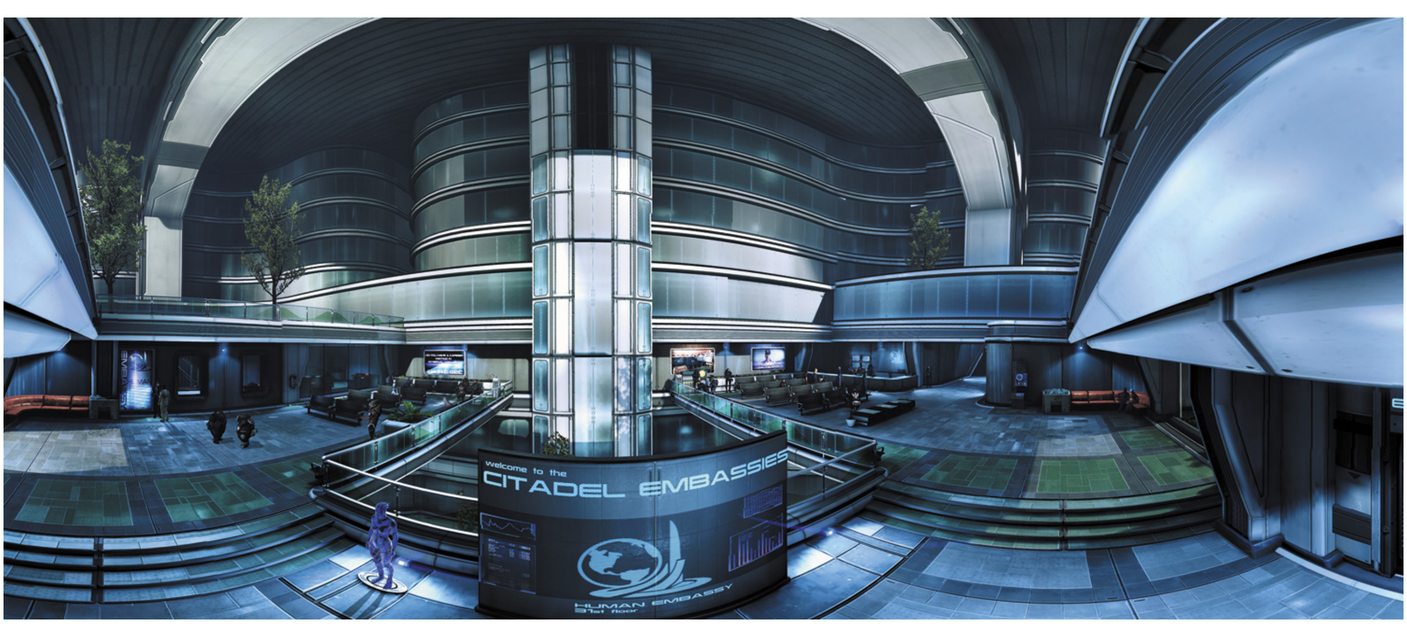
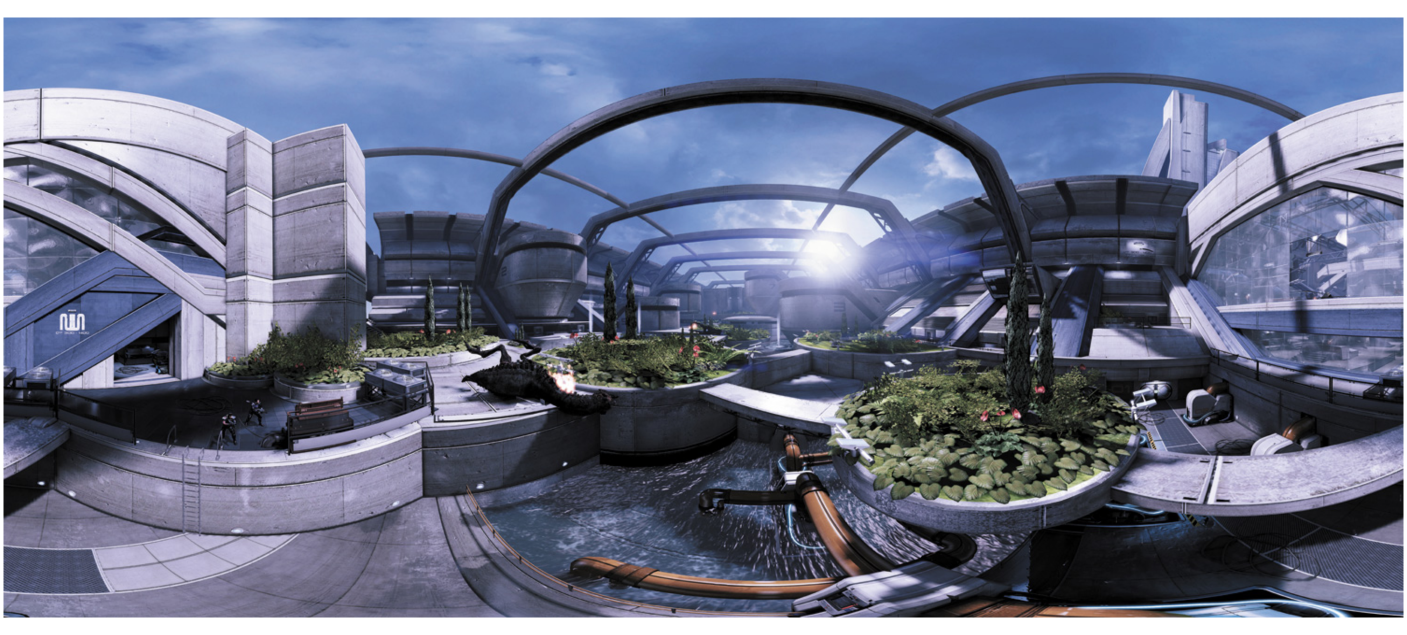
PRIMA GAMES

Collectors Edition

Mass Effect Inception





The nondescript exterior of the five-story brown edifice that houses BioWare's Edmonton studio blends into the background of this mixed commercial industrial area in south Edmonton.

Flanked by hotels on one side and a busy four-lane freeway on the other, the building's generic nature stands at odds against the incredible creative output from the over 200 game developers who inhabit its upper three floors.

Considering how garish and ostentatious the video game industry can be at times, a casual observer might be surprised to discover that despite the lack of corporate pomp and circumstance evidenced by this structure, some of the best video games in the world have been conceived, created, and shipped from within these walls.

The story of Mass Effect's inception began in the fall of 2003. During the previous summer, the studio had shipped what would become one of their biggest sellers to date, and certainly one of the highest rated and most beloved in the pantheon of Star Wars games—Knights of the Old Republic (2003).

KotOR was BioWare's answer to the console role-playing game (RPG), a genre that, until then, had long been dominated by the Japanese industry.

By allowing players to explore the depths of the Star Wars mythology, BioWare not only created one of the most successful and highest-quality Star Wars games to date, but also laid the groundwork of fan base and fiction they would later capitalize on with their massive multiplayer online game The Old Republic (late 2011).

Being huge fans of science fiction and storytelling, the KotOR team appreciated the opportunities the Star Wars property provided them to create a nearly endless supply of compelling fictional characters, worlds, and dramatic arcs—all core elements to a successful RPG.

But they also felt like it was time to spread their wings.

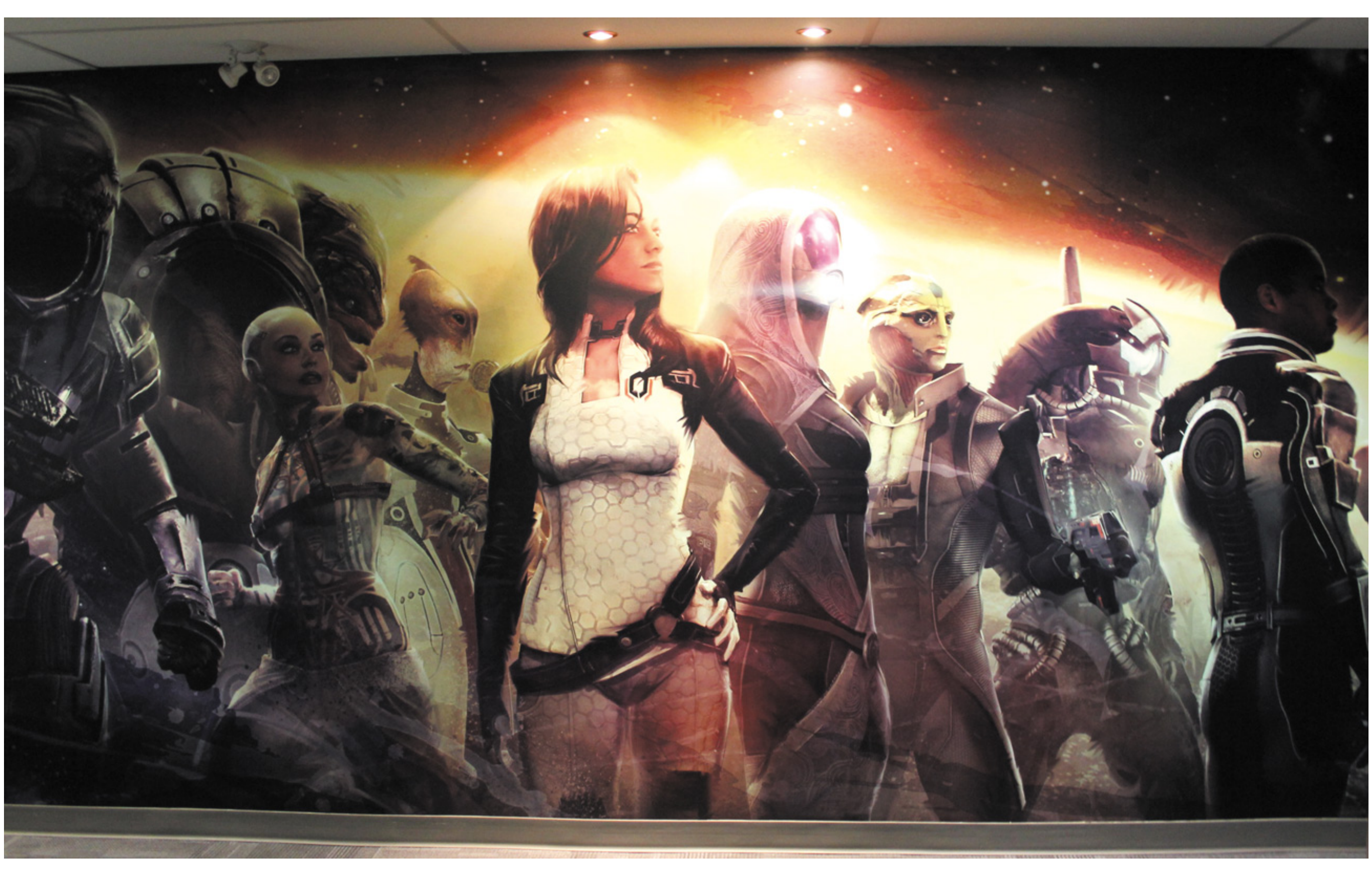
Creating their own setting would allow them even greater freedom to explore fresh ideas and to put their own spin on the sprawling space opera, giving them full control over how they wanted to evolve their own story arcs and characters over the course of multiple games.

So in the fall of 2003, while working on shipping the PC version of the hit RPG, the core KotOR team, led by project director Casey Hudson, began to envision what the next BioWare game might look like.

With rumors of the next-generation Xbox in development, the team set themselves to the task of defining what an original BioWare science-fiction RPG, powered by next-generation console technology, would be.

The project began with a single document. Hudson drafted a one-page outline of what he believed the game would have to be—structurally, technologically, and creatively—in order to really create a fruitful, creative space for near-endless exploration and strong fan and community engagement.

Simply put, Casey said, "We just wanted to make the biggest, best game experience we could conceive of." The document was given the deceptively generic title "SFX," an acronym for "science-fiction X"; the resulting game would be anything but generic.



Within the one-pager, SFX was articulated from a very high-level: It was to showcase an original science-fiction universe, featuring space travel, and players would have their own ship.

The game content and systems would be built to support the player, who would be able to experience the biggest possible science-fiction adventure. The document also described some of the ways in which SFX would capitalize on next-gen technologies.

The new project would harness a critical discovery the team had made during the development of KotOR: By bringing the camera in closer to the game's action and storytelling, players developed a more intimate, lasting connection with the events of the game and with the characters themselves, leading to stronger long-term engagement.

Even with KotOR's relatively basic (by today's standards) character-realization technology, the team realized that the magic of the game emerged from the player's experience of the world through the characters with whom they interacted.

A big focus of SFX would be leveraging the power of new technologies, made possible on the new consoles, to advance the art and science of digital characters.

A game this large and ambitious inspired equally ambitious goal-setting.

Not only would BioWare create a sprawling story-driven science-fiction RPG, but they would also conceive of it as a trilogy, creating a vast universe that could support the needs of three massive games.

And with interactive storytelling being a cornerstone of BioWare's development culture, the new game would include what Hudson referred to as its "killer feature":

Players would be able to take their character from one game to the next, and their decisions in the story and during gameplay would follow them through the three-part saga.

This would be the first game series to support such unparalleled persistence in player decision-making.

Casey Hudson

"We just wanted to make the biggest, best game experience we could conceive of."

With these high-level goals in mind, the team turned their attention to building a universe.

They began by tackling such foundational decisions as the nature of space travel—for example, would it include relativistic effects such that supporting characters would age while players traveled through space?

Would there be aliens? Would the game take place on a single world or multiple worlds? How large would the known universe be?

The answers to these questions would help determine the range of possible player activities.

Once the team had established the basic structure and parameters of the universe, they turned their attention to writing the multiple storylines that would support the player's experience.

They had to create key characters, races, home planets, and star systems, and they had to define cultures and histories for entire civilizations.

Overall, this conception of the format and universe that would become Mass Effect would occupy the team for more than a year and would lay the groundwork for one of the richest and most engaging science-fiction settings of all time.

But the work was only beginning.

Collectors Edition

Q&A: The Art Direction of Mass Effect

Interview with Derek Watts – Bioware

The visual design of Mass Effect was one of the first things people noticed when the game was first announced back in 2006. To this day, the visuals in the franchise are still one of its strongest defining characteristics. How was this art direction conceived?

We developed the art direction for Mass Effect about eight years ago. We had just come off of Knights of the Old Republic, and that helped define what it was we wanted to do.

We knew we wanted to make a science-fiction game, but knew we couldn't set it in a Star Wars–like universe. We were inspired by the clean, epic futurism of Syd Mead, John Harris, and John Berkey.

Syd Mead has a signature style that is clean, futuristic, purposeful, and very different from Star Wars.

His art suggested colorful and hopeful worlds with clean designs—not bleak settings.These were places you might want to go to, places you could imagine yourself being.

We drew inspirations from these artists and began working in our own element.

When we began designing other elements of the world, we knew we didn't want characters to have bulky armor or clothing with too many layers.

We knew the design had to look futuristic but not ridiculous. Armor and clothing ended up being very tight.

Based on fan feedback, we bulked up the armor on characters over the course of the franchise—for example, Shepard in ME1 looks small due to his armor being skintight.

In ME3, we've made his armor look more imposing to give him more presence. But regardless, the initial design principles have remained throughout the franchise.

For Shepard, elements like the red stripe and the N7 logo (which was actually extrapolated from a logo on a pair of skis) were things we played around with in concept art that stuck around and became part of Shepard's personal branding.

It's interesting when you are developing an artistic style for a game. At first all the feedback you get from people is comparing it to things they've seen elsewhere.

After the game comes out and resonates with players, the style becomes its own. Now we hear things like, "Hey, I just saw this movie and it had a Mass Effect feel to it."

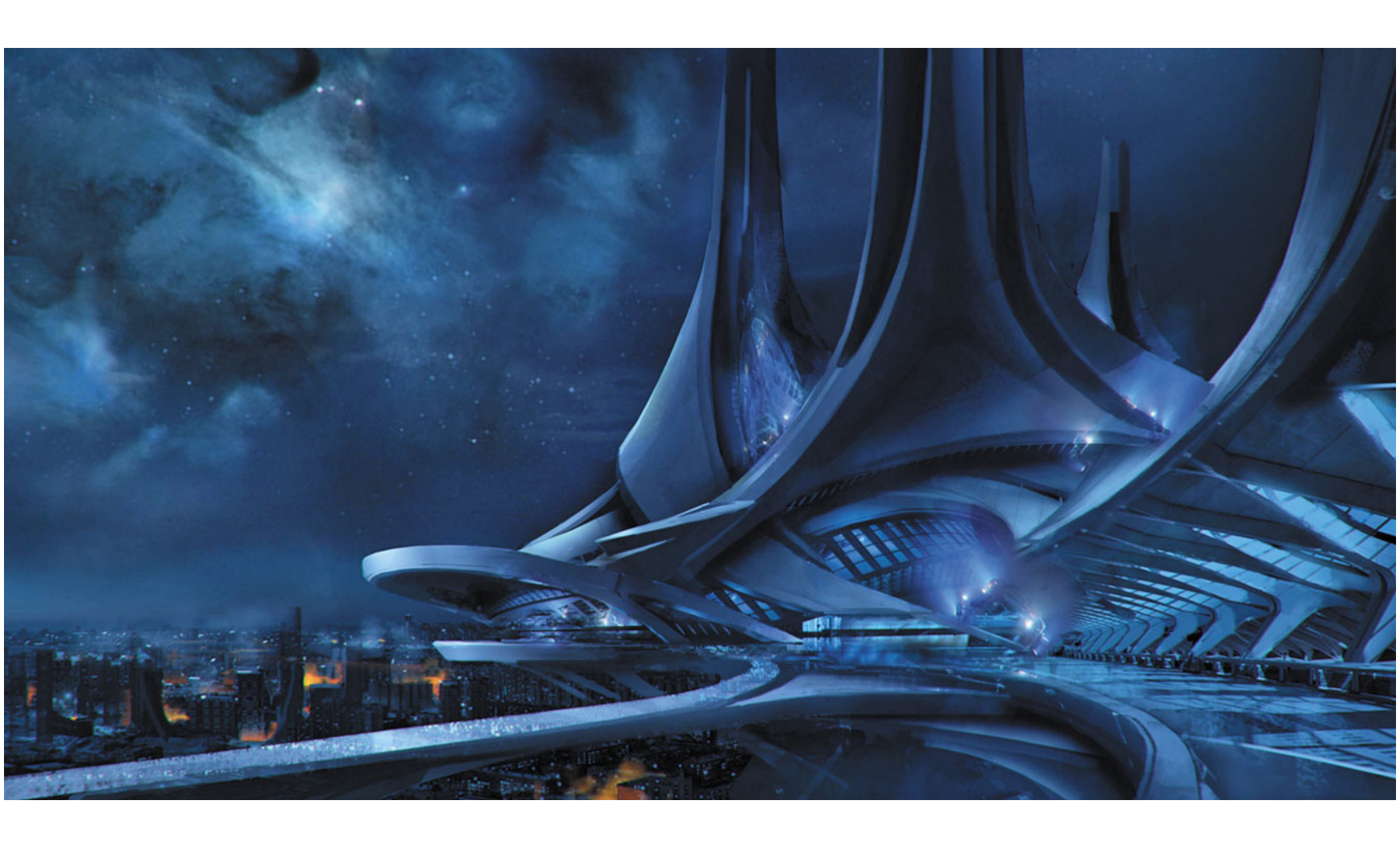
It was clear with the first screenshots for Mass Effect 1 that you guys were trying to differentiate yourselves visually from all the other sci-fi games out there, starting with the brighter color palette.

We definitely wanted to have pools of bright color, saturated color, etc. We didn't want to have the desaturated browns and other earth tones that a lot of action games were using at that time.

We wanted to evoke the feeling in our players that these were places they would want to go to. They weren't bleak, there's a sense of hope, there's purpose to the design, environments are uncluttered, etc.

We actually referenced a lot of real-world architecture. Santiago Calatrava, the Spanish architect, has designed these amazing buildings that are really there. They are built. They exist.

It was important to us that we were inspired by things that were functional and true, both from an architectural and engineering standpoint.



Do you have a label or name that you've come up with for your art direction?

Actually, we don't. (Laughs). We basically call it the Mass Effect style. We know what it means, and when we look at something, we can evaluate whether it looks "Mass Effect-y" enough or not.

The Normandy, for example, has iconic features like the little metal frames around the exhaust ports. We recreate these same features on other ships to echo this design, and it becomes the "Alliance" style.

The Normandy itself was heavily based on the Concorde—a very futuristic-looking airplane in its own right.

The designs are very iterative. The Mako, for example, was initially designed to be large and heavy like artillery, but this led to problems with scale.

In the game, the enemies were too small to see by comparison, so we shrunk it down to support gameplay.

We ended up designing most of the Mako iterations with six wheels, and that stuck throughout the process.

Eventually we decided that six wheels was a characteristic of vehicles in the Mass Effect world, so we carried that throughout a lot of the vehicle design.

Of course, in the second game we decided to move away from the wheeled vehicle and made a flying shuttle instead, but a lot of the same design principles persisted.

What was the design process behind the alien races? They are such a big part of how you express the Mass Effect universe, and they are so unique in their own right.

When creating characters and races, we've followed pretty much the same process throughout the franchise: It usually starts with writing.

The concept artists like to get a paragraph describing the background of the alien. That gets the creative juices flowing. We then start designing in phases.

In phase one, we'll give the character artist full freedom to explore the character, and they'll create six or seven designs—they'll go quite crazy and wild.

After this phase, we'll winnow the design down to two or three concepts and then gradually just chip away at it until we have something that starts to feel right.

It's a balance, though—you usually start with a rough idea, but you want the concept artists to have freedom to use their own creativity, because you never know what you'll end up with in the end.

They usually don't want too much information from writing—just enough to give them a starting point. For example, what is the inspiration for this "people"? Are they militaristic? Pacifists? Are they a birdlike race? Are they from lizards?

A good example of this process is the design of the krogan. In the original description from the writers, there was some mention of bats.

If you look at the krogan head, you can see some of the shapes of a bat head in there. A lot of people look at the design and assume we were going for reptiles.

With Garrus, the writers mentioned the turians were a proud, birdlike race with a strong military tradition. We went through tons of iteration across four different artists, and then when we finally nailed it, we didn't change a thing beyond that.

Garrus Vakarian

Sometimes the final design is a hybrid. For example, the salarians: one artist designed the head, another the body.

We always imagined salarians being our version of the "gray" alien—the one you always see in autopsy hoaxes.

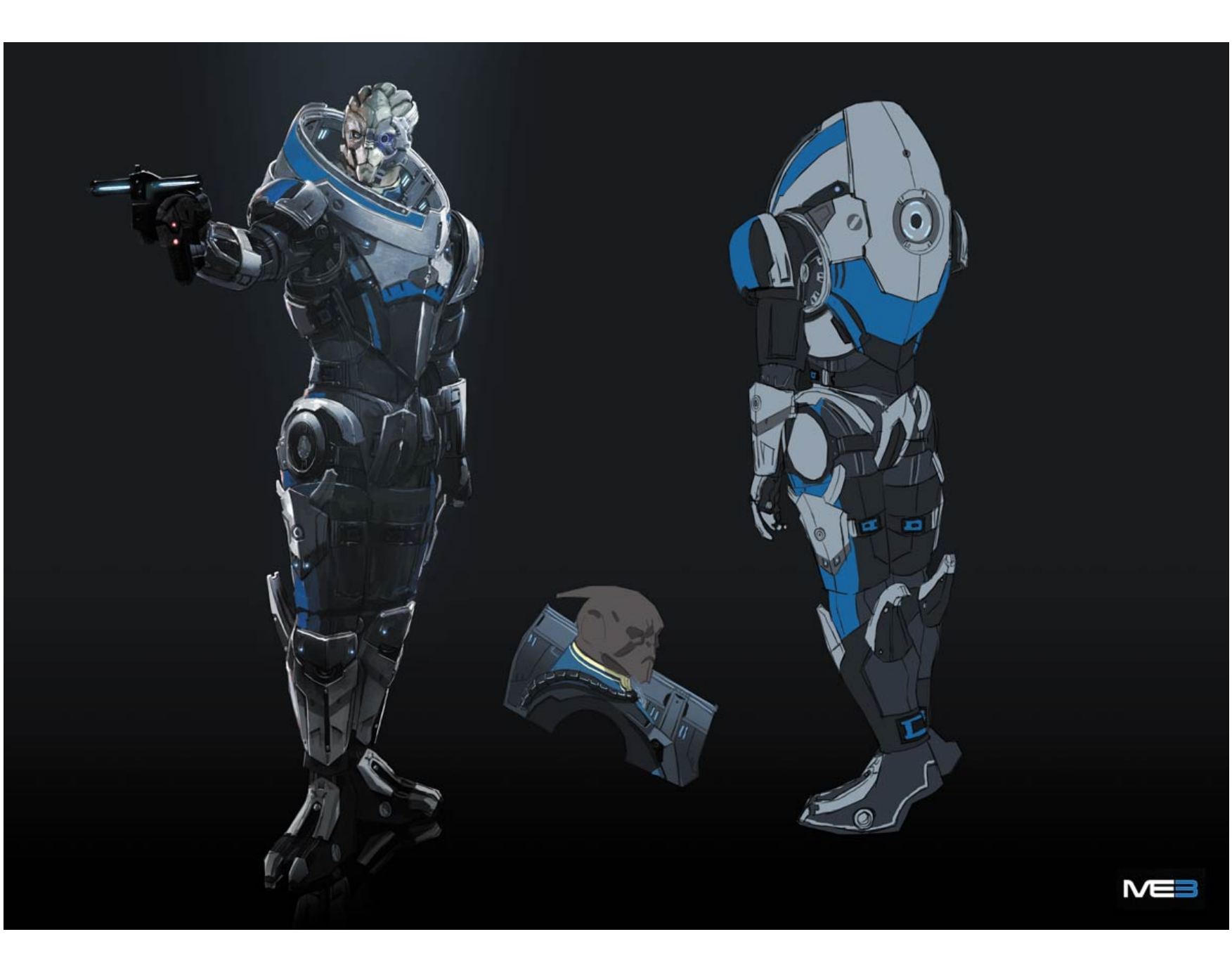
Using that as a starting point, we explored different ideas for what their bodies would look like and hit on the idea of a sunken chest.

That really stuck, and then that informed what the rest of their body would look like. Their armor needed to follow the shape of their body, so the salarians ended up with this really iconic armor profile.

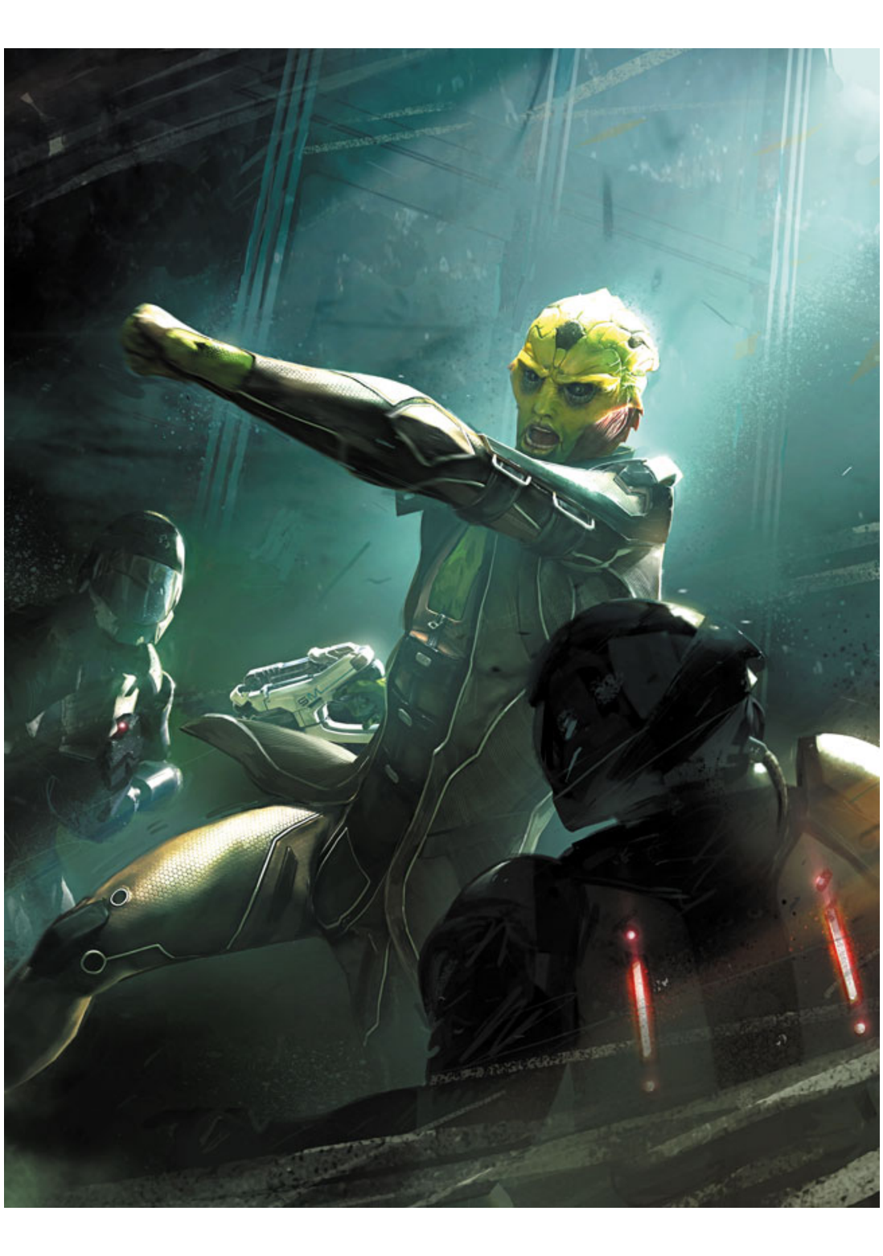
We designed all the aliens without clothing so that the modelers would know exactly how to create clothing and armor for them.

This mattered because otherwise the artists wouldn't know if the hump on a krogan's back, for example, was part of the armor or actually part of their physiology.

Knowing what the aliens looked like under their clothes helped ensure we could create realistic designs that conformed to their physical characteristics.



Garrus Vakarian



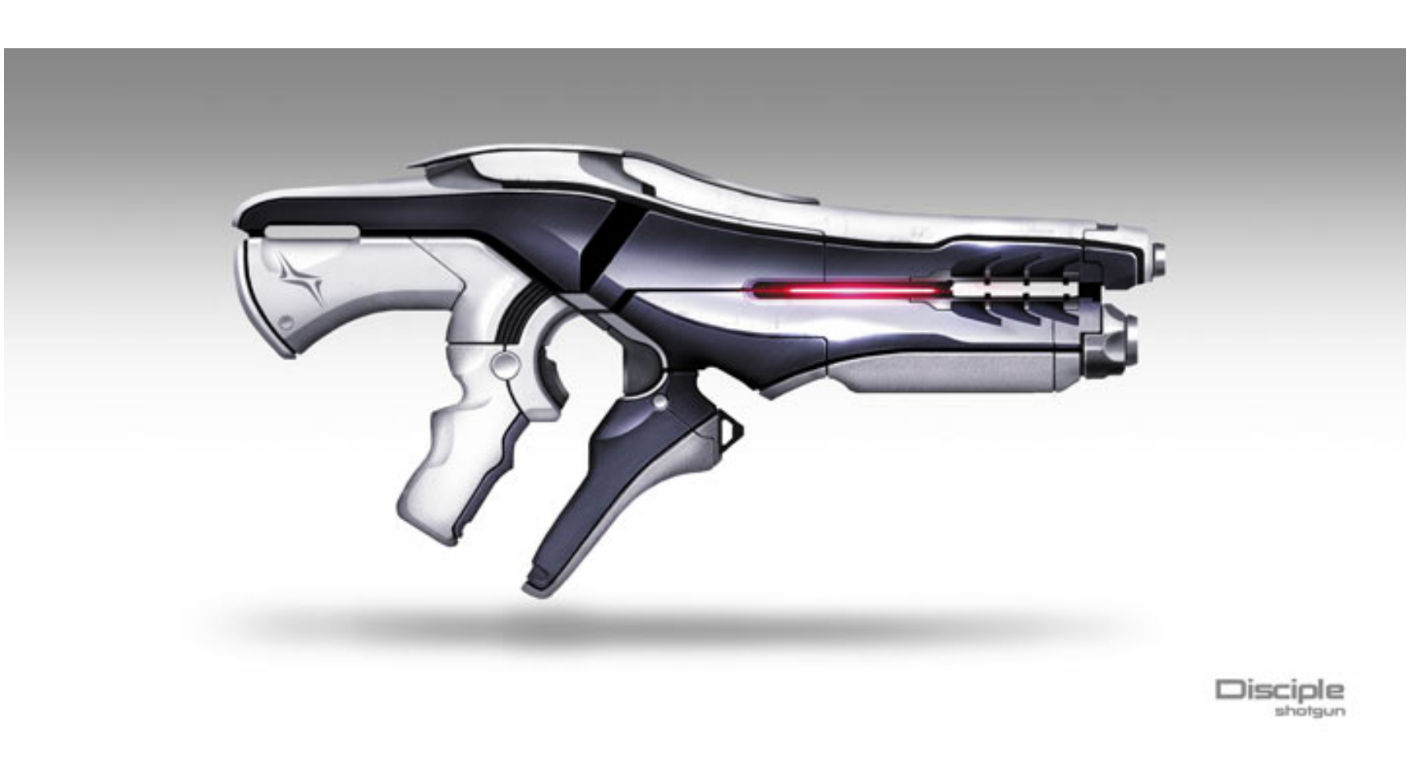
So the process was very exploratory, highly iterative. Sometimes you'd find it right away, and other times you really had to work to find the right design.

Exactly. A great example of this was Thane in Mass Effect 2. We had a lot of difficulty finding the right design for him. What threw the artists off was this note from the writers that said Thane was to be a potential female love interest.

We went through tons of iteration with his design. At one point he was a bird-of-paradise with feathers all over him.

He had white skin with giant red dots, he was transparent, etc. We asked for feedback from some of the women in the office to see what they thought, and the reaction was just horror.

We knew we needed to go back to the drawing board. In the end, we found a great design for Thane—it just took a while to get there.



Disciple

What was your process for the industrial design for weapons? What did you use for reference?

For Mass Effect 1, we made the weapons look a bit more like they belonged in a science-fiction film. We didn't want to push that too far—we still wanted the weapons to look practical. As with ships, we tried to include the arch.

If you remember the M-8 from ME1, it had this strong sweeping arch in the design, but at the same time it would look right at home on a present-day battlefield.

We added dials and things to make the weapon look functional, but we didn't want to take it too far; the designers are passionate about real-world weapons, so we were inspired by actual weapons.

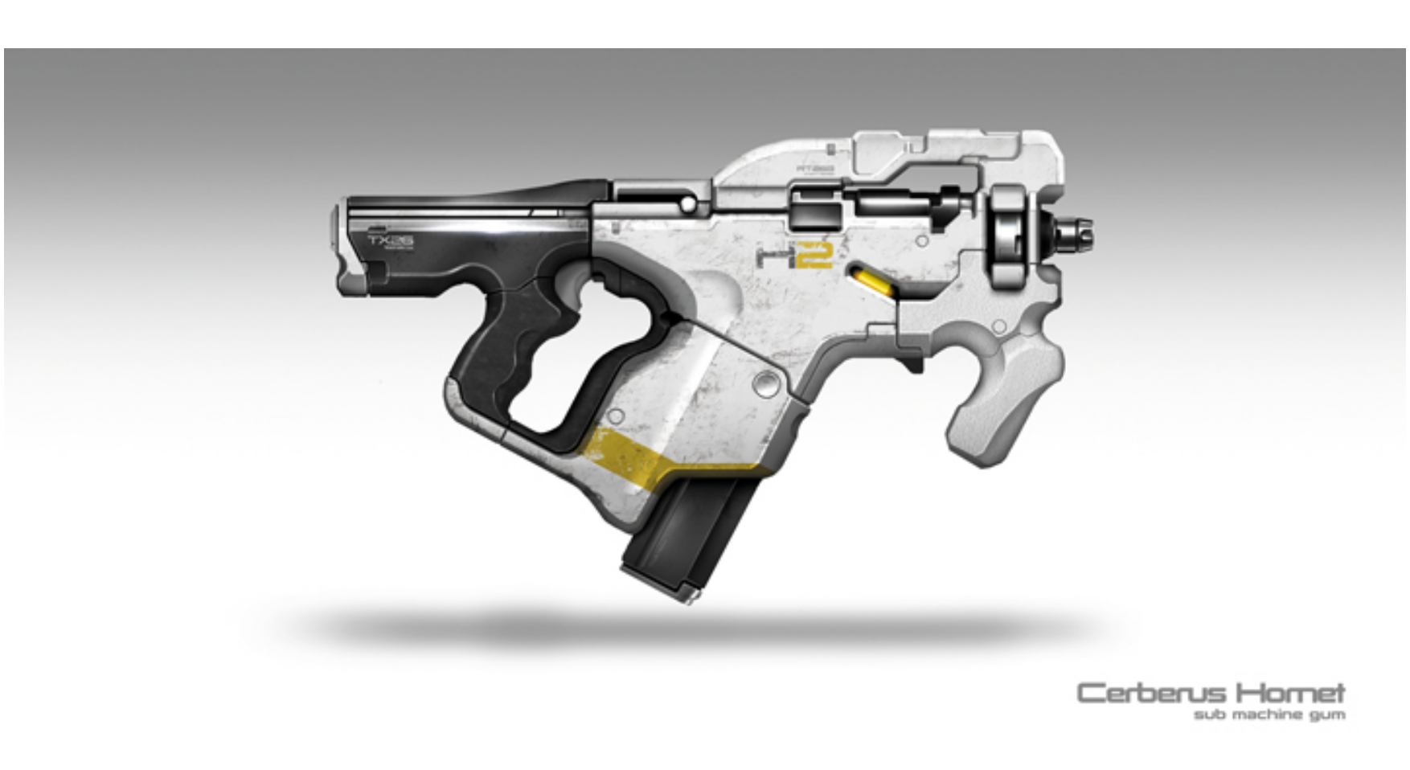
We have always struggled to balance how futuristic the weapons should be. We were inspired by the Japanese anime movie Appleseed.

It has these phenomenal weapons with organic designs. We looked at a lot of anime, which often has really interesting ideas for things like panels and the way weapon handles form to the hand.

For Mass Effect 3, we had the chance to develop more alien weapons. We used the weapons in the movie District 9 for reference.

It was fun exploring these because, for human weapons, we had decided to not take the science-fiction elements too far, but for the alien weapons, we could push it.

So, for the asari weapons, we used a very clean design with shapes and curves that match the way the asari look.



M-25 Hornet

In Mass Effect 1, you introduced the idea that the player could see their weapon loadout on their character. The weapons were modular and could collapse down to fit onto the character's back.

But when the player would enable them, the character would grab them and the weapon would unfold and come to life, as if to say, "I'm ready." How did that figure into the process of weapon design?

We looked at character designs showing all the weapons on the back and decided it looked really cool.

For the first few weapons, we designed them meticulously so that they could collapse realistically, and we involved the animators in the design since they would have to be the ones to make the weapons fold naturally.

We soon realized that it was incredibly hard to make weapons that could fold and collapse down in a realistic way, so we started to design them to identify "cut lines" where the modelers would break the weapon up into pieces.

The animators would then animate the collapse and unfolding animations using those cut lines. The end result was that the weapons did not always fold realistically, but they always looked good.

And it really came down to the animators finding clever ways to collapse the weapon down in such a way that there wouldn't be too much of the weapon geometry crashing or sticking out from the player.

It was pretty challenging for the animators. Sometimes we would hand them these really huge guns and sort of wish them good luck in figuring out how to collapse them down. But they always did.

There are a lot of amazing locations in the Mass Effect games. Walk us through the process of how you create a new location. As with the characters, does it begin with story?

Pretty much. But even before the writing team gets too far, we'll have concept artists working on ideas. Right after we finish a game, we start brainstorming new worlds.

We create massive art folders and just fill them with reference images and concept art. To start the process, we'll gather ideas for locations without knowing much about the story.

There's a bit of a chicken-and-egg process going on—it's difficult for the concept artists to be inspired to create an image without text to help them get started, and the writers and designers work better when they have a piece of concept art to inspire them.

This early ideation process is really important for the concept artists, especially after we've completed the last project—it gives them a chance to unwind and try new ideas.

We use a lot of real-world references for these locations. There are so many amazing real places on Earth that people don't know about.

We use National Geographic a lot to find these. We just look for a "hook," something from the real world that inspires an idea, and then the final design feels more realistic because it was inspired by a place that really exists.

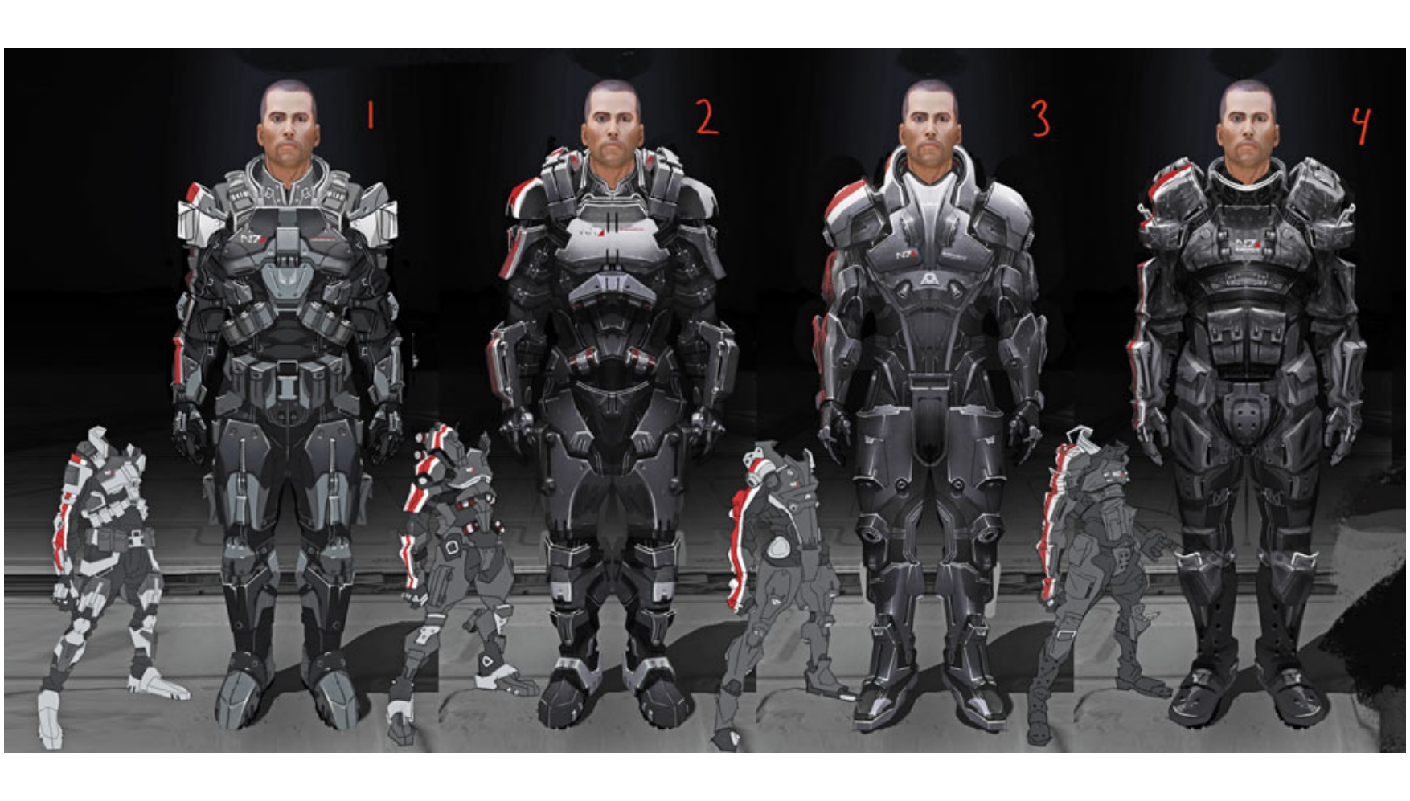
Sometimes the locations are inspired by what we think feels natural for the type of race. For example, we always thought the salarians would live in a hot jungle, so we created a lush, humid world for them.

We thought they might live near rivers and would set their structures in harmony with nature—they wouldn't overbuild. They would blur the lines between the landscape and their architecture.

Even when you look at their bodies, which have a very organic feel to them, they don't seem like they would build angular structures of concrete and steel.

So using that as a starting point, we go out and find as many real-world references as we can. For the salarian lab facility, we were inspired by a shopping mall in Turkey that had amazing arches and a kind of layered terracing between levels.

The concept artists use this reference art as a starting point when imagining these environments on a grander scale.



We've talked a lot about the conception of the individual races. Within that, what was your process for creating individual characters like Commander Shepard?

Well, Shepard was quite the challenge, being the main character and the face of the game in terms of how it was marketed.

We gathered a lot of references and built a huge folder of concept art while exploring the style of his armor, his appearance, his face, etc. For his face, we always knew we would scan in an actor's face, but we needed to figure out what that actor should look like.

We had some good ideas for the armor. We drew versions of Shepard with light, medium, and heavy armor before deciding to use the heavy armor.

At one stage it was red. The iteration process is to create character concepts, pick the strongest direction, put the designs on the wall, and then gather as much feedback as possible.

The team thought Shepard's red armor looked too clean and made him look like a medic. At one point an artist did a charcoal-colored version of the armor with a stripe and a symbol on it.

Everyone really liked that, so it set the tone for the direction we would take. After that, we only explored dark armor.

We gave Shepard the white and red stripe to make his design a bit more iconic, and then we came up with the logo.

The logo was actually originally inspired by a logo on a piece of ski equipment. We put it on Shepard just to see what he might look like with a logo and didn't really give it much more thought.

It resonated really strongly with the team and fans, so we made it part of his uniform.

For Shepard's face, we took the body we had built and tested it with heads from different actors. We went through a lot of different actors but couldn't find the right fit.

We had a stack of magazines we used for reference nearby, and the one on top had some photos of a popular male model.

We tried his face and it really worked. It gave him a unique look; he wasn't the "all-American" hero, but one that looked multicultural, a bit of a mixed European look.

This suited what we thought the future of human heroes might look like, where ethnic lines would become more blurred.

And at that point, when the artwork started to be seen more and more—by the team, by the fans, in marketing material, etc.—the iconic elements like the logo and the stripe would appear more and more often, and we kept putting it on more and more things because it seemed to resonate so strongly.

We discovered how important those elements were to Shepard's "brand."

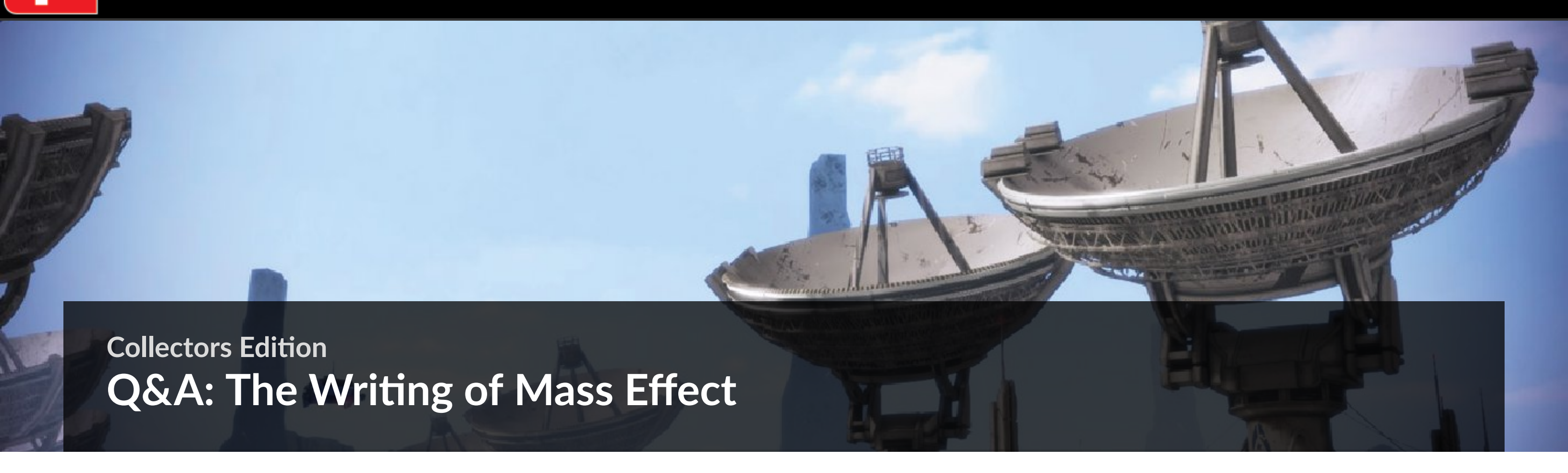
How big is the art team on Mass Effect 3?

The number fluctuates between 50 and 75 artists and animators.

That breaks down by focus to be about 5 character artists, 2 to 3 concept artists, close to 20 level artists, 10 to 12 cinematic animators, 5 gameplay animators, and a number of additional artists to support cinematics and prerendered scenes.

We also outsource at times. The attention to detail poured into the game by each of these artists and animators is truly phenomenal.

If the art in Mass Effect is special, it's because of the love these artists have for the license, the universe, and wanting to continue pushing the visuals to create compelling worlds for players to experience. It shows in all the work they do.



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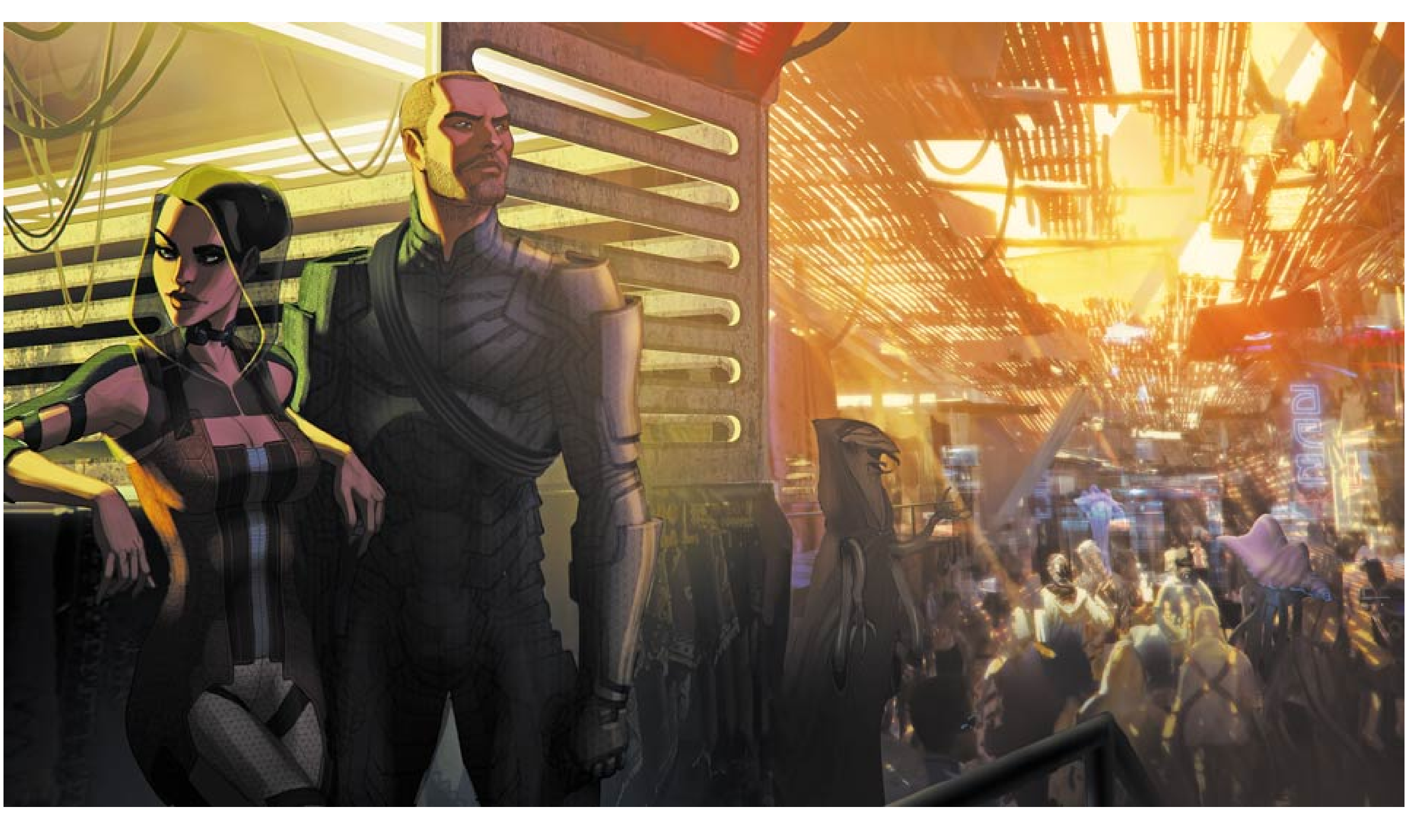
Q&A: The Writing of Mass Effect

Interview with Mac Walters – Bioware

Where does BioWare's love of story-driven games come from?

The source goes back to the founders, Ray Muzyka and Greg Zeschuk, who love story and wanted to create games in which story was important.

Over the years, BioWare's games have delivered compelling stories. It's something the studio is known for. Our games put the player's emotional involvement with the characters first.



BioWare is one of the rare studios that has put a tremendous emphasis on storytelling, with major investments in people and tech to support this. How big is the writing department on Mass Effect 3?

There are 17 writers on staff and 5 editors. In addition to the writers, there is an entire cinematic design department that was born out of the development of Knights of the Old Republic, their role being to support all the conversations created by the writing department.

In fact, it goes far beyond support—the cinematic designers have their own skills and expertise that has allowed them to take the conversations much further than we as writers ever thought possible.

So, between writers, editors, and cinematic designers, there are nearly 35 people working purely to support storytelling in the game.

Are there specializations within the writing team?

On most of our earlier games, the writing teams were small enough that every writer had to wear multiple hats. The writing team on Mass Effect 3 is big enough that we have been able to let specializations occur naturally.

So, some people will focus on writing content that helps flesh out the world, like planet descriptions for uncharted worlds, and Codex entries, or things like the Cerberus Daily News in Mass Effect 2.

You also find that some writers are really strong at understanding the role-playing aspects of the game, and so they focus on those elements. Still others are really into the characters and understand emotional engagement and writing scenes that really draw the player in.

Where do you typically recruit writers? Is there such a thing as a typical place?

There really isn't a typical place. Our writers come from diverse backgrounds, which is one of the team's strengths.

Some writers come fresh out of school, others come from having written screenplays, others are from within the games industry, and still others who are involved as editors or with the theater scene.

These diverse backgrounds mean we come up with more diverse and interesting content.

In addition to writers, there are editors on the writing team. What do editors do, and how do they fit into your workflow?

Editors are responsible for managing a lot of the non-voice-over text that goes into the game—things like Codex entries, weapon and ability descriptions, etc.

Sometimes they are writing this content as well, but generally they are keeping track of it and organizing it.

They make sure all the text gets translated into the various languages and establish standard processes for getting text content into the game—a huge task when you consider how many people are creating content for the game.

And they do all the other things you would expect of an editor: They review the text, make sure it's grammatically accurate, no spelling mistakes, etc.

And then we also have editors who are involved with the dialogue we create, and they are responsible for trimming and streamlining the dialogue to make sure that our dialogue delivery is punchy and as economical as possible, to avoid things getting too verbose for the player.

How many lines of dialogue do you have in the game?

Mass Effect 3 has about 41,000 lines of voice-over dialogue. Also, with better editing and just being better at using our dialogue, we're able to make the 41,000 lines go even further than the lines in previous games.

Mass Effect 3 has the most dialogue of the three games in the franchise. We've added a lot more banter into the game, and much more ambient dialogue than the previous ME games. All this together makes for a very rich dialogue experience in ME3.

How is the writing team integrated into the rest of the development team?

Over the years, we've learned that close collaboration with the other departments is the best way for writers to work.

The writers are encouraged to spend time with all the other teams, share what they are working on, interact with them and solicit feedback, ask questions, etc.

The writers should not be sitting by themselves—they need to get out and talk to the level designers, the animators, cinematic designers, etc.

Writers should not wait for any of those groups to come to them; they need to be proactive in seeking and sharing information.

Has the writing team developed any specific processes along the way?

During Mass Effect 2, we began developing what we today call the Narrative Review process. It's a process we've evolved heavily during Mass Effect 3's development as well. This process starts before we even begin developing any levels in the game.

The project leads will establish a "hook" for a level. This might be a simple statement, what we call a "razor" for a level.The razor is usually a short evocative statement that captures the theme of a level.

So, for example, the razor for the opening levels in Mass Effect 3, where Earth is attacked and ravaged by the Reapers, was "Rome is burning." This succinct statement captured the tone and sense of chaos we wanted to explore in that section of the game.

Once we have the razor, we start working with the level designers, gameplay designers, cinematic designers, and then start to flesh out what this razor means. How will it be supported by gameplay and action and story moments, etc.

Coming out of these conversations, we develop a Player Experience document, which is a short document—about one page—that describes the core experience of that level.

Once that Player Experience document is approved, we create an Execution document, which literally walks through each step of the player's experience.

The Execution document includes feedback from all the content creators who will be working on that piece of the game, so they can collectively determine what work needs to be done to deliver the level.

Once the Execution document is approved, we are basically given the green light to create the content, at which point we collaborate as a big multidisciplinary group to create the level.

By this point, so much iteration has occurred that we might look back and see a lot of the original ideas from writing are gone, have been improved upon, that things have been streamlined, or that new ideas have been added to the mix.

During the development of the content, the writers will work closely with the level designers and cinematic designers, supporting them with content, providing tweaks, updating them on new direction or edits that need to be made, and generally making sure that everyone is aware of any changes to the narrative that inevitably happen over the course of development.

In terms of writing, one of the strongest elements of story in the Mass Effect games is the characters themselves. How were they conceived and developed?

The emphasis on characters in our stories is highly intentional. We feel like the best stories are the ones with the strongest characters, and that's what we as players relate to, more so than even the epic storylines and themes themselves.

The process of character creation depends on each character, and what role they play in the story. For example, in Mass Effect 2, we knew the Illusive Man was going to be a key character; he'd be the player's mysterious contact and guide throughout the game.

We spent a lot of time defining his psychology and how he would react to various situations. And then we worked out things like how influential he was, what resources he'd have access to, who did he have working for him, and most importantly, what his motivations were.

Once we have some of this background material fleshed out, we work with the concept art team to figure out what these characters look like. The concept art becomes the razor for that character, quickly informing players as to what that particular character is all about.

Sometimes the character-creation process is much more incidental, such as with Thane in Mass Effect 2. We knew we wanted to create an assassin character but didn't have many specifics in mind beyond that.

As we developed his character, we ended up creating a whole new species for him, detailing specific characteristics such as how his species recalls events, their relationships with other races, etc.

Thane wasn't critical to the bigger story, but in exploring him as a character we discovered new opportunities to expand the Mass Effect universe.

How does the writing team track the various story threads in a Mass Effect game? What tools do you use?

We start with a five- to seven-page document that outlines the high-level story of the game. This becomes the source of the emotional backbone of the game and hits on all the key beats in the story.

It's worth noting, however, that this document doesn't try to define any of the missions or levels in the game; it is simply an outline of the story we want to tell with the game.

This document goes through a lot of revisions—for example, the last version for Mass Effect 3 was revision eight or nine.

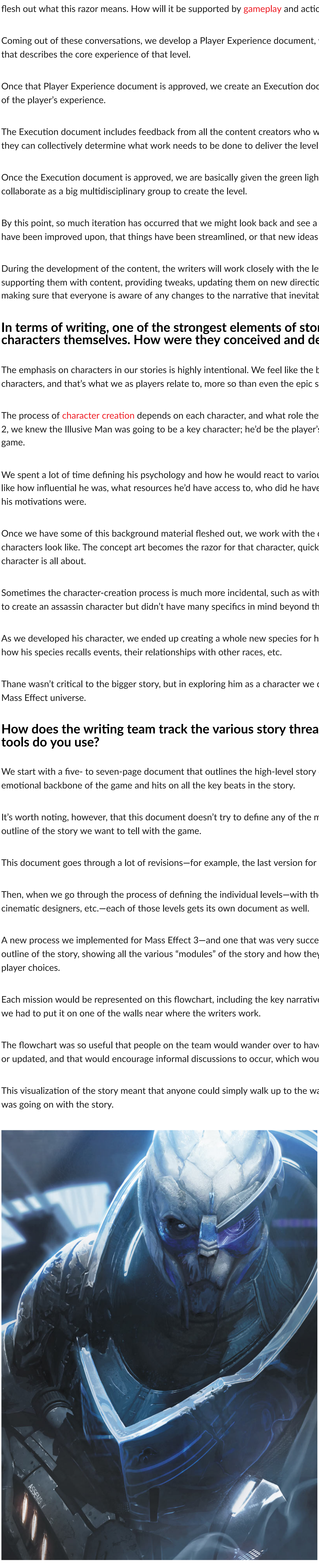
Then, when we go through the process of defining the individual levels—with the gameplay designers, level designers, cinematic designers, etc.—each of those levels gets its own document as well.

A new process we implemented for Mass Effect 3—and one that was very successful for us—was that we created a flowchart outline of the story, showing all the various "modules" of the story and how they related to each other based on the possible player choices.

Each mission would be represented on this flowchart, including the key narrative beats of that mission. It became so big that we had to put it on one of the walls near where the writers work.

The flowchart was so useful that people on the team would wander over to have a look at whatever new thing had been added or updated, and that would encourage informal discussions to occur, which would lead to other new ideas being formed.

This visualization of the story meant that anyone could simply walk up to the wall and immediately get a clear sense of what was going on with the story.



How does the writing team keep track of the possible story outcomes across all three Mass Effect games?

We have a tool called Story Manager that helps us keep track of all these conditions, using flags, that allows us to check on any state. For example, at the end of Mass Effect 1, we track the outcome of the Council: Did they survive, or were they sacrificed?

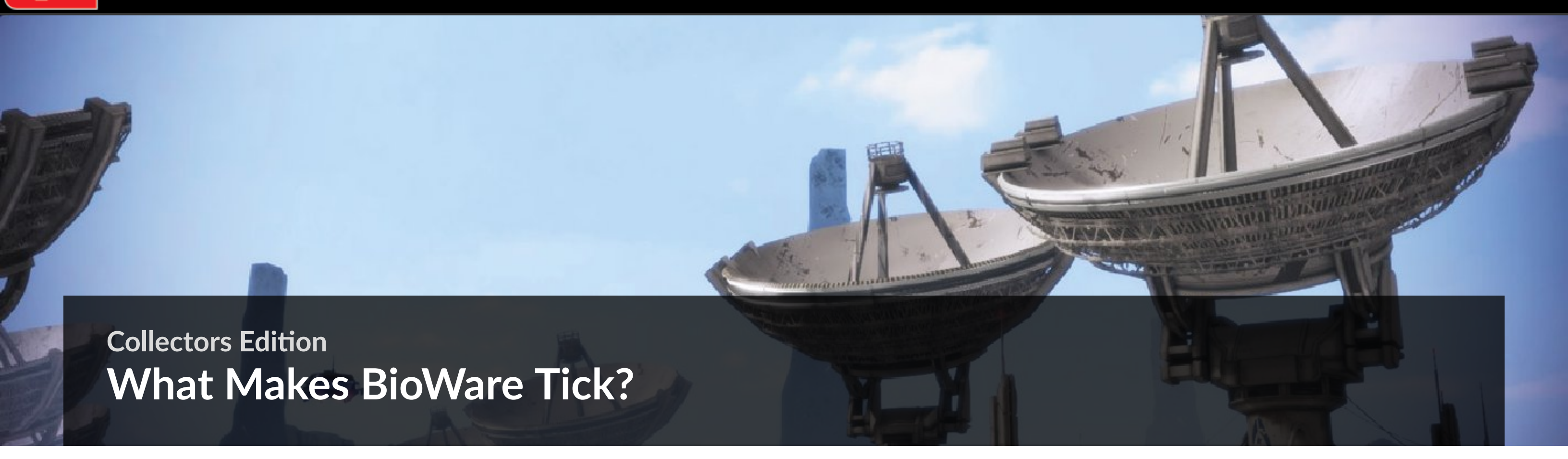
The tool allows us to track a large number of states across may variables, including dialogue options, whether or not players completed certain missions, which love interest characters they chose to romance, etc.

These various player choices become a state that is tracked by the game so that it "remembers" these choices in future games.

We track thousands of conditional states, and this gives us the ability to know the most important story conditions up to that point. This also gives us a window into what characters and choices resonated most strongly with players.

The challenge in Mass Effect 3 was creating a story that supports all the possibilities from the previous two games while delivering a really compelling experience for players regardless of their previous choices, including major events like the deaths of certain key characters.

The key is that the game offers a great story, but that this is improved again for you as a player when it reflects the choices you've made. That's the heart and the magic of Mass Effect's story.



Collectors Edition

What Makes BioWare Tick?

Game development is a bit of a black art, with every studio plotting their own approach to the creation of their games.

With BioWare developing some of the best and best-loved games in the world, one has to wonder: What makes the company so successful?

Focus on Emotion

Through their games, BioWare has always sought to create experiences that are about story and emotion. Their investment in talent and technology has always been oriented around the goal to engage players deeply.

This has resulted not only in BioWare games having some of the best interactive storytelling in the industry, but also one of the most loyal fanbases in the business.

Gamers come to care about the BioWare games they play because they are able to invest in something more than technology or action. They form personal connections to the digital characters in the rich worlds they are invited to explore.

They want to inhabit those worlds, and the worlds become part of them.

Common Pillars

All BioWare games embrace a set of common player experience pillars: being able to explore, having nonlinear and interactive storylines, and having strong action and combat with the freedom to define and progress your character.

BioWare sets out to create games that support these experience pillars.

Labor of Love

BioWare does everything they can to help the player fall in love with their games. This often comes down to details, the tuning and polish that can only come at the very end of a project.

On a macro level, a version of the game without this additional attention from the team would be nearly identical—what the player sees on the back of the box, what is shown in trailers, and even moments that are sampled would feel like the same game.

But because everyone on the team wants the player to fall in love with the game, they pour their heart and soul into making it as good as it can be.

These hundreds or thousands of little details—polished items, a tight narrative, clean art assets, optimal performance, and no bugs—result in a shipped game that players can fall in love with.

Culture of Excellence

As development on a BioWare game comes to a close, everyone on the team is playing it regularly, sharing feedback, and logging bugs they come across.

Beyond the team, play-testing feedback is being gathered from dozens of sources: focus testing, mock reviews, executive reviews, and so on. All feedback, no matter the source, is considered valid and valuable.

The team is pragmatic about taking feedback. If one or two people out of five hundred recognize a flaw or feel that something is amiss about a point in the game, scaling up to several million players means a lot of people might feel that same thing.

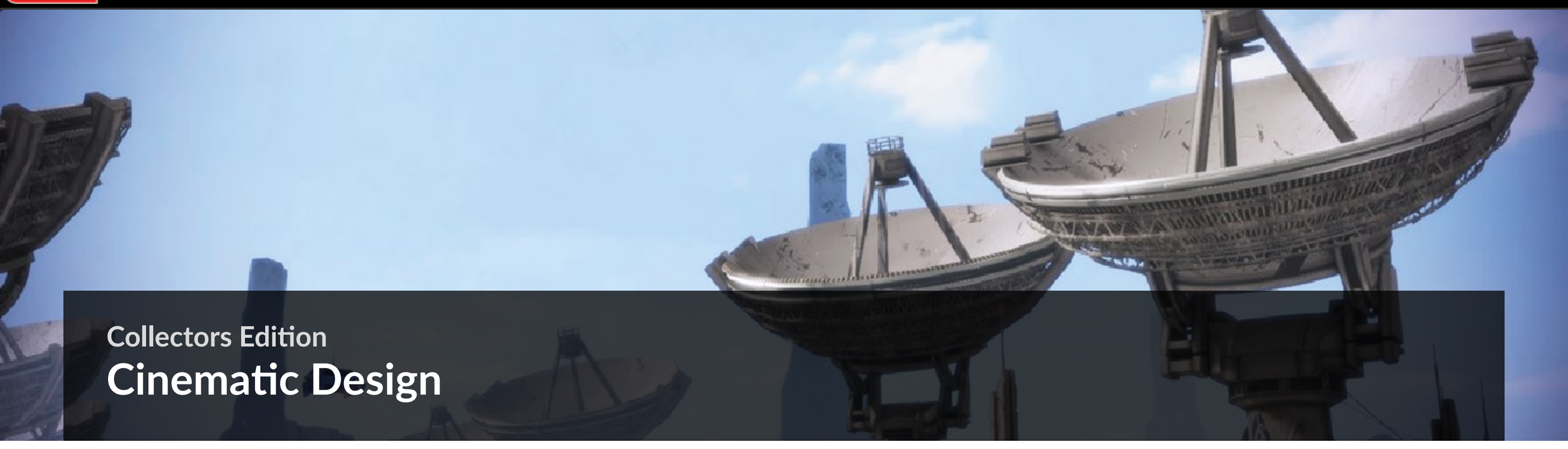
Being open to all feedback is a big part of what makes BioWare games so polished and successful, and this openness to feedback and criticism extends to all areas of the team itself, because after all, the team members are usually their own worst critics.

Creating Greatness

In the end, clear goals and a mature process certainly play a role in explaining how BioWare can deliver such well-crafted, successful game experiences.

But ultimately it is the passion of the developers that ensures the player experiences magic through the game.

The team at BioWare constantly pushes themselves to perform better and better, with the ultimate goal of creating great and long-lasting games for their fans.



Collectors Edition

Cinematic Design

BioWare's focus on developing cutting-edge story-driven game experiences has made them pioneers in many different areas—technology, process, development philosophy—and in some cases, they have to create entirely new disciplines.

When development of the original Mass Effect began in the early 2000s, the responsibility for creating the hybrid conversation sequences—which were, in effect, partly cinematic, partly interactive—fell on the shoulders of a tightly knit collaborative drawing from the design, art, technology, animation, and audio departments.

Over time, however, it became obvious that the unique nature of the interactive dialogue sequences that define so much of the Mass Effect experience depended on individuals with an unusual combination of skills, talent, and experience

Rather than simply rely on a cross-disciplinary team to take ad hoc responsibility for the sequences, BioWare created an entirely new role within the studio: the cinematic designer.

Creating a Cinematic Moment

At the inception stage of a new cinematic moment, representatives from various teams and disciplines get together in what BioWare calls a "dog-pile."

The dog-pile is typically comprised of a level designer, a writer, a cinematic designer, and a level artist.

The macro story for the game will be broken down into components, with each component being assigned to an area of the game—a campaign, a level, and then several specific cinematic moments.

When the team zeroes in on a specific area of the story, a writer will present a narrative brief for that area, outlining any major plot elements that need to transpire within the sequence.

While the level designers begin to figure out the details of what the gameplay space needs to be, the cinematic designers begin breaking the content down into sequences of narrative, and outline where different pieces of story need to happen.

They will map out important beats like character introductions and enemy entries and will identify where different narrative tools can be effective; for example, dialogue sequences, cinematics, and three-second cutscenes that showcase a memorable event and provide a punctuation point for the player's experience at that time.

In Mass Effect 1, the role of cinematic designer was new and relatively undefined.

Production started on ME1 with two cinematic designers who had been technical designers previously and who were then assigned to support the writing of the game.

To give a sense of how significant the process of cinematic design has become for BioWare's games, fast-forward five years.

Mass Effect 3 now has a dozen cinematic designers responsible for creating over 300 scenes and facilitating digital acting for over 23,000 lines of dialogue.

It would take a staggering 27 hours to play all this content, plus all the other ways in which the cinematic design team supports the game experience (from helping to create ambient moments, to three-second cutscenes, to huge moments or grand spectacles, to background dialogue).

Suspending Disbelief

The team on Mass Effect 3 understood that their primary job, especially with regards to narrative sequences, was to ensure the player's suspension of disbelief remains intact throughout the game.

Any time a small glitch, bad camera cut, or rocky transition pulls the player out of the experience, the game has to gradually build that player up again to the point where they are fully engaged and invested in the fiction of the game.

With story moments comprised of multiple disparate parts, the cinematic design team's primary responsibility was to maintain this seamless flow of content and to be the guardians of this smooth narrative flow.

Seamless transitions between different types of content were incredibly difficult to pull off.

But the team felt so strongly about the value of creating a smooth-flowing, seamless experience for the player, one that was not broken by cuts and fades to black, that they were driven to create new technology and processes to make these seamless transitions possible.

It is even evidenced from the level-to-level transitions, where the player is being moved from one environment to another (for example, barely escaping the Reaper invasion of Earth and then moving seamlessly into the Normandy's interior to take stock of the situation and plan for next steps) without the game having to stop to load.

This creates a wonderfully free-flowing experience that feels great for the player and allows momentum to carry forward, heightening the intensity and drama of the game.

For those instances where a load is necessary due to technical constraints, the loading process will be hidden behind a short contextual cinematic that again helps ground the player in their current environment.

Collectors Edition

Cinematic Storytelling in Mass Effect

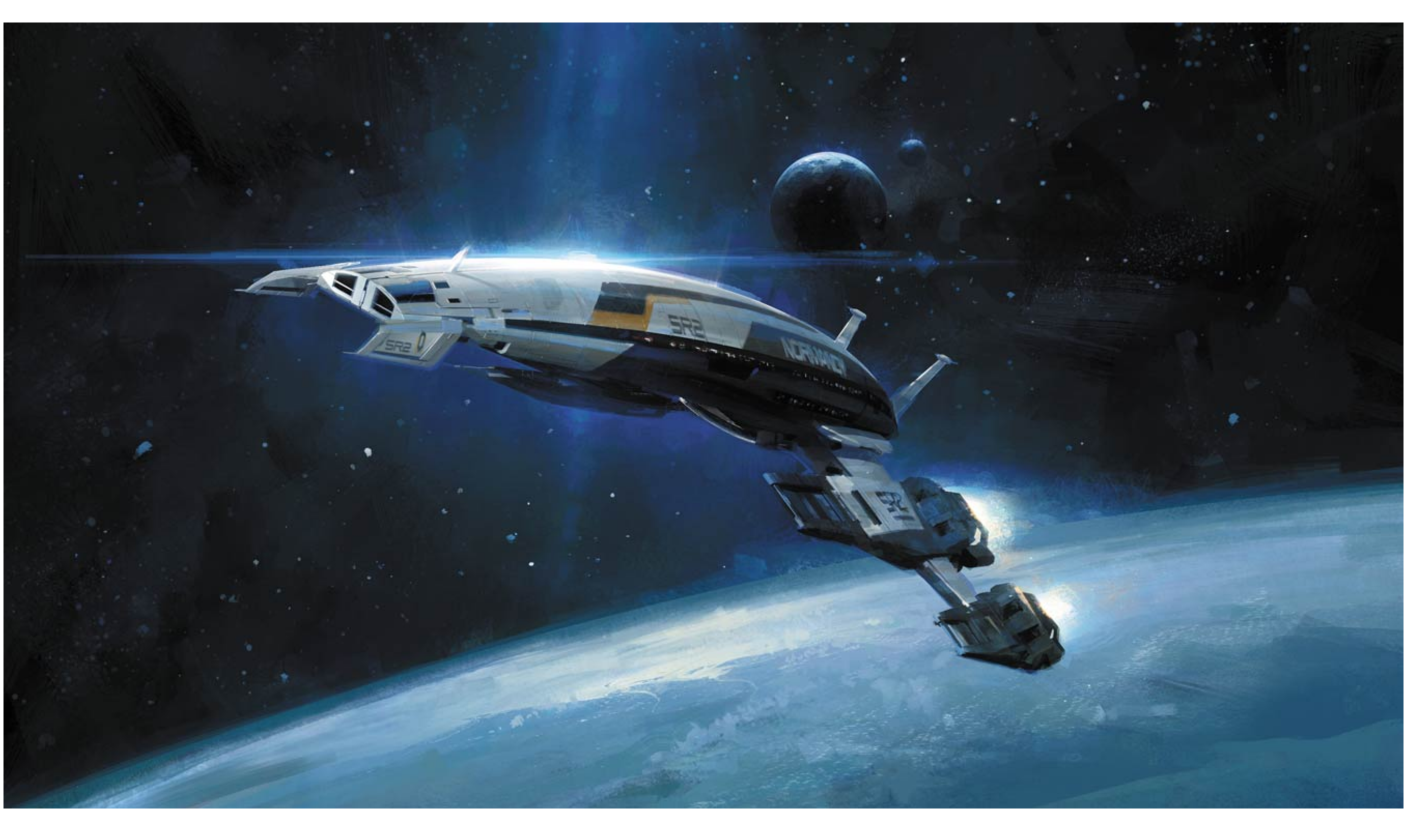
Camera as Character

Back in 2001, when the concept for Mass Effect 1 was first being developed, the cinematics team considered ways through which they could make the cinematic scenes more authentic and realistic.

Use of lenses and camera techniques was quite forward-thinking for the time, as was the notion of communicating the presence of a cameraman (i.e., using cinematic camera techniques to provide proper framing and scene editing, thus imbuing the interactive scenes with a sense of drama).

Players could feel not only that they were participating in highly dynamic story moments, but also that those moments were presented in a beautifully authored way that channeled techniques we had all come to recognize from our favorite film directors.

The camera itself has become a character.



Adding Personality to Spacecraft

In Mass Effect 2, the cinematics team invested in additional tools and processes in order to deliver even more cinematic moments, in particular scenes involving the various spacecraft.

The memorable scene in which the player comes face-to-face with the new Normandy—after having experienced its destruction firsthand in the game's opening sequence—utilizes the full spectrum of cinematic storytelling techniques such as camera, lighting, and music.

This helps the player fall in love with the new ship. Indeed, the scene plays out like meeting an old love, one you never thought you would see again.

All of these techniques come together in Mass Effect 3.

The cinematics team had to find a way to communicate story and character through each of the ships in the game—the Normandy, the Reaper ships, and others—and in the battles between them.

Using Lenses

The team developed a standardized lens language for the game, including how lenses were used to portray specific ships, locations, and characters to help capture iconic silhouettes for each.

For example, female characters would be viewed through longer lenses to avoid distorting their proportions, whereas aliens tended to look better through wider lenses, the distortion adding to their sense of "otherworldliness."

Smoother Editing

Improving the editing of scenes and narrative delivery was also a big focus for Mass Effect 3. Transitions into and out of gameplay sequences were made smoother, delivery of story information was tightened, and the overall presentation of cinematic story flowed much more naturally and with stronger forward momentum than ever before.

Connecting to Shepard

In all the Mass Effect games, the cinematics team paid particular attention to how Shepard would be introduced to players at the beginning of the game and how he would appear throughout the entire experience.

This meant creating specific shots, some of which were used in all three games.

For example, the shots where the camera tracks Shepard's movement as he travels through the Normandy (in Mass Effect 1 and 2) or in the trial scene (in Mass Effect 3), and the slow pan around to reveal his face.

This is particularly important, as players can customize their own Shepard, and this reveal is hugely validating as a cinematic introduction to their personal character.

Another subtle cinematic technique the team has used to create a stronger bond between the player and their Shepard is the subjective camera used in all three games when Shepard is coming to after having been unconscious.

In Mass Effect 1, this occurred after Shepard's first visions of the Reapers.

In Mass Effect 2, it was when he woke up on the operating table in the Cerberus reconstruction facility. In Mass Effect 3, it was after the explosion in the trial that launches Shepard across the room.

These scenes not only provide a highly cinematic moment for players, but they also allow them to feel that they are experiencing what Shepard is experiencing: Their vision is blurry and then resolves to clarity. And once they can see clearly, they feel they are Shepard.

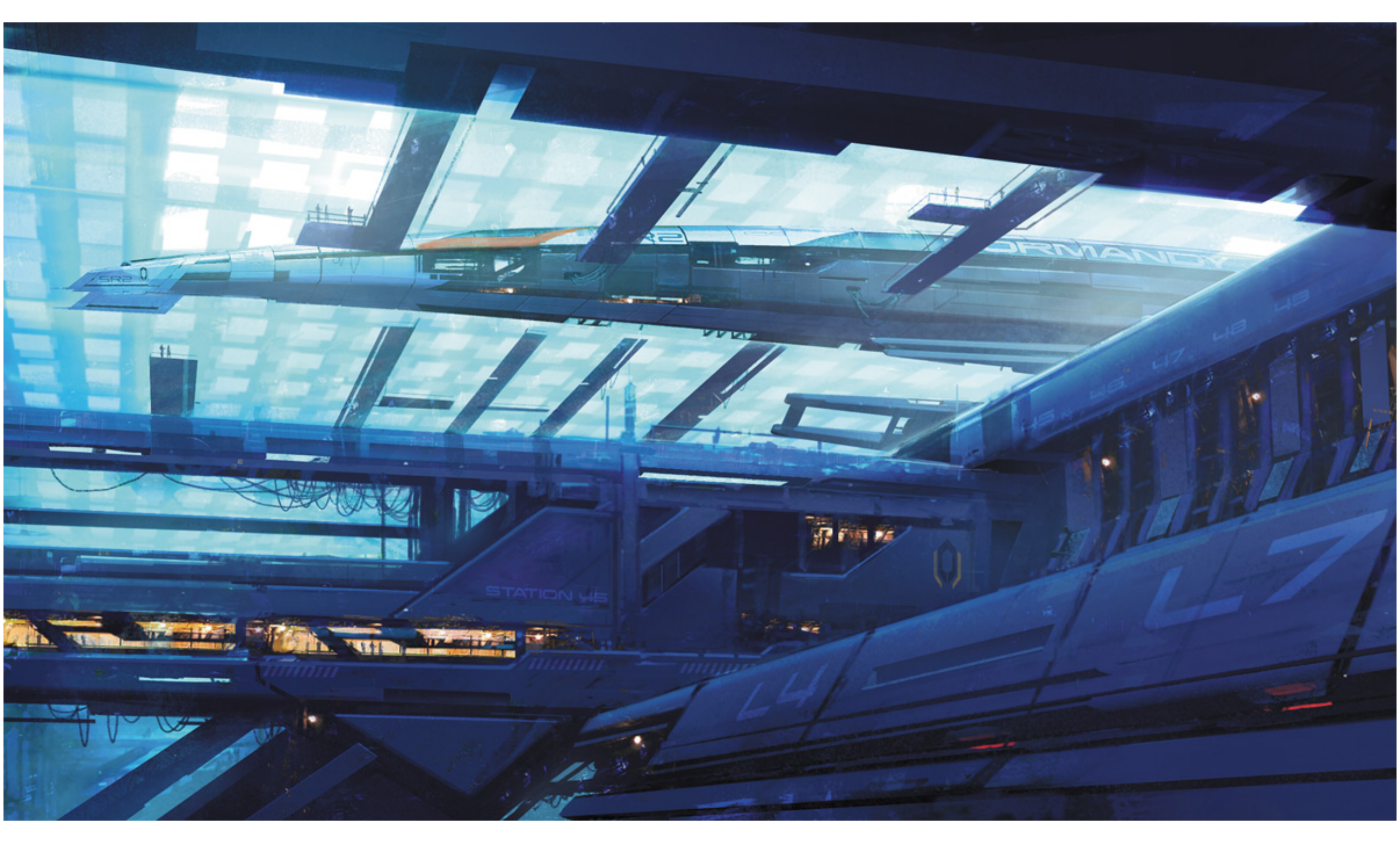
Inspirations

For real-world film inspiration, the team looked at films from several directors. A few stood out: the films of Ridley Scott; the Oscar-nominated Afghanistan war documentary Restrepo, which portrayed the gritty, dirty life of soldiers in that conflict; scenes from Akira Kurosawa films, in particular the burning of the third castle in the film Ran.

Within specific battles, the team tried to capture the spirit of warfare throughout history—shots of soldiers lined up and firing down a line recall rows of riflemen with muskets, the smoke and sound of fire "hitting" the camera.

There is also a shot the team referred to as a "thousand ships," which was inspired by the Trojan War.

These inspirations added an air of authenticity to the cinematic experience of combat and helped deliver a sense of the game being in a "timeless war."



Cinematics Production Process

For Mass Effect 3, cinematics production was a complex, multistaged process involving several departments, continuous iteration, and an incredible attention to detail.

Unifying techniques and processes from video games and film production, the team at BioWare have evolved a workflow over the creation of three Mass Effect games to boast one of the most mature cinematics production methodologies in the industry:

1. Cinematics team will get a script for a scene or even just a short description from the writing team.

2. The team will do a storyboard pass, brainstorming various ways to set up shots and move the camera before bringing it back down to the basics.

The team asks the question, "Are the shots in the storyboard sufficient for communicating the story in the scene?" If the answer is yes, they are ready for the next step.

3. The team will create a scene using "previz animatics" (rough animation that shows the intention of a scene and helps work out specifics around camera position, timing, cuts, etc.) based on the storyboard.

The previz sequences are built within a gray-boxed space with static characters, using animatics for basic action and cameras.

All geometry is placeholder at this point, and there is little thought paid to the finer points of lighting and whatnot.

The scene will often be previz'd to a temp audio or music track that is intended to help communicate the overall mood of the scene.

4. The previz sequences will be put together, creating the "narrative playable." This playable allows for iteration to happen until the basic flow, pacing, camera position, and editing cuts are in place.

The playable may be shared with music composers at this time so that they can begin making plans for how to score the scene.

5. The team then reviews the density of narrative content when playables are stacked together.

This can reveal areas where there are too many cinematic story moments occurring in sequence without sufficient interactive moments or breathing room in between.

The team can then take a step back and evaluate, with the writing and level design teams, how to reorder the moments so that pacing feels more natural.

6. Once the pacing and location of individual narrative playables are in place and considered locked, the cinematics team proceeds to animation and motion-capture to create the character movement, body language, and facial expressions that will bring the characters and story to life.

7. The team takes their previz animation to the motion-capture studio.

Each character does not have a single actor assigned to it; rather, there are certain actors who help set the style of body movement for a particular character, which the team then utilizes utilizes depending on the needs of the scene.

Hand animation is used to smooth out any slight variations in the performance for a certain character that has been played by multiple actors.

This ensures that a particular performance matches the original reference established for that particular character.

8. For characters who have specific voice actors, like the Illusive Man, played by Martin Sheen, the team will screen the previz, and the actor will deliver a voice performance based on the previz scene.

Often the actor will add so much to the scene through their voice performance that the animation team will revisit a scene and reanimate to capture the magic of the actor's performance.

9. Once all this work is done, the cinematics team begins collaborating with the level-design team to integrate the cinematic sequence into the game.

The lighting team will get involved to help ensure the scene looks as good as possible, and the visual effects and audio teams will add the final layer of integral polish to the scene.

Music will then be integrated integrated, and the scene will be complete.

Collectors Edition

Digital Characters

Creating Closeness

As a series, Mass Effect has always emphasized the importance of relationships between characters. In some cases, these relationships are friendships. In others, intimacy is involved.

Creating digital characters that feel lifelike and do not present themselves in a way that ruins the player's suspension of disbelief is a huge challenge.

Creating digital characters capable of communicating strong emotions between each other is even more complex.

The Mass Effect games often show characters touching each other.

Whether this is Shepard pulling an ally out from flaming wreckage or helping them up from a seated position or laying a hand on a friend who has experienced a tragic loss, these moments heighten the realism of the characters and their plight, as well as strengthen the player's connection to them.

Their emotions feel real.

Beyond that, the close intimate relationships between characters are as much a technical achievement as they are an artistic one.

Characters touching, kissing, or giving each other emotional gazes—these are all actions that we take for granted as being easy, yet within the digital world of a video game, they require state-of-the-art technology and the team's dedication to complex problem-solving.

These are difficult problems to solve; you need a team that cares about solving them.

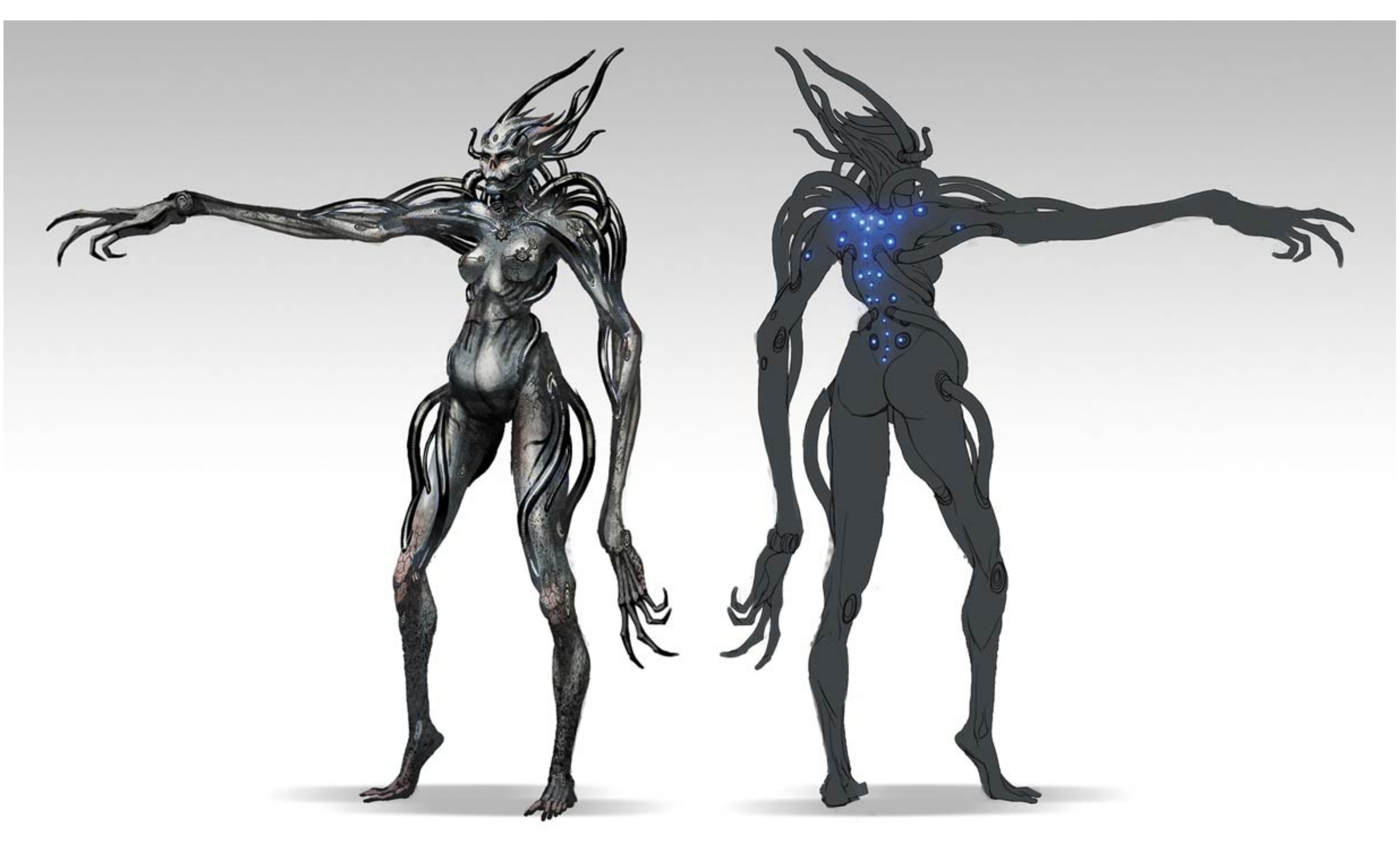
Cinematics vs. Real-Time Story Moments

Mass Effect 3 delivers its story through multiple types of sequences. Each type offers its own advantages and costs to the project, and all require a staggering amount of technology and manpower to create:

- Prerendered cinematic scenes (also known as "cutscenes") are fully animated sequences that are triggered at specific moments during the game. These sequences tend to be highly produced, with custom lighting, music, and visual and auditory effects, and are reserved for major, significant story moments. Prerendered cinematic sequences have the advantage of offering the animators full control over the circumstances during which they will be viewed by the player, which means they can be highly produced and do not need to account for player input that might modify the outcome. These are essentially short, linear movie clips that offer no interactivity.
- Interactive dialogue scenes need to account for a range of variables; for example, which allies did the player bring to the scene, or what choices have they made elsewhere in the game that have an impact on available dialogues? The player can interact with these scenes through the "dialogue-wheel," which enables them to make significant choices about the content and outcome of a particular conversation. There are hundreds of these scenes in Mass Effect 3
- In-game dialogue scenes are those in which allies make short comments or observations while the player is moving through the world. The player has full control over the scene, and the allies typically offer this ongoing commentary as they follow the player character through the world. These dialogues require the least amount of effort to integrate into the game but are also the least produced.

As a general rule, the more polished and special-case a piece of content is, the more expensive and limited it is in terms of facilitating reusability. The fact that players can often not tell the quality difference between these types of scenes—all of which are seamlessly blended together throughout the game—is a huge testament to the talent of the Mass Effect 3 development team.

Scaling for Variety



For Mass Effect 3, a full-time animator resided within the cinematics design team, their express purpose being to create animations to support the emotional moments.

When a request for a character moment came through from the writing team, the animator would first work with the cinematic designers in reviewing the thousands of existing animations to see if any currently existed that could meet the needs of the scene.

If not, the animator would try blending snippets of existing animations to attempt to reuse content that was readily available.

If the scene needed animation that did not currently exist or could not be assembled out of available pieces, the animator would work to capture the necessary animations during the next motion-capture recording shoot.

This process meant that dialogue-heavy story scenes that were fully interactive—meaning they were not prerendered cinematics, and the player was left fully in control—boasted a healthy amount of animation content captured expressly to service the needs of these scenes.

With over 300 dialogue scenes in Mass Effect 3, there was a real risk that content reuse could lead to a feeling of repetition and "sameness" about the content.

Players are very sensitive to content reuse, and seeing the same animations used over and over again in multiple scenes can make a game feel like a "budget" production.

Using the above process, the team was able to ensure a feeling of purpose-built content having been created for each of the scenes, adding to the quality of the player's experience.

The Eyes Have It

Presenting convincing digital characters is highly dependent on how true to life a character's eye movement is. This includes where the character is looking relative to the player's expectations.

Do characters appear to be looking at each other when they are speaking? Do they appear to be looking at the player when they should be? Do they stare lifelessly in the completely wrong direction?

Do their eyes blink realistically? Do the subtle eye movements mesh with the emotions they are conveying through dialogue and body language?

This, again, is a highly challenging area of character production and one that the Mass Effect 3 team invested significant resources in solving.

When characters in Mass Effect 3 look around the world, they refer to a set of values that reside "under the hood." These values define various parameters around eye movement and are tweaked endlessly to get the best results.

Using these values as a baseline for eye behavior, designers are then able to place "look-at targets" in the world that instruct the digital characters to look at very specific locations over the course of a scene—an object, a character, the player's character, and so on.

Once the scene is playable using the designer-defined "look-ats," the animators can go in and tweak the eye movement by hand for any instances where the programmatic solutions do not work to their satisfaction.

MASS 3
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While many of these tools and processes existed in earlier Mass Effect games, new technology was developed to help ensure the eye movement and look-ats for characters in Mass Effect 3 would look natural and would avoid behavior that pulled the player out of the experience.

The end result is some of the most believable-looking eye movement of any digital character in the medium to date.

Lip Synchronization

As with eye movement, ensuring digital characters' mouths are moving appropriately—known as "lip synchronization," or, more commonly, "lip-synch"—is a critical part of delivering a believable, high-impact performance.

While the Mass Effect series used specific technology to automatically generate the movement of characters' lips in real time, there was also an extensive creative process that went into ensuring the technology was tuned to deliver believable, engaging performances.

The original automated technology could bring the lip-synch to an acceptable baseline level, and with the help of the programming team, the bar could be raised to a new level of quality.

In order to improve the lip-synch, the team developed a process inspired by the breakdown of speech in traditional 2-D character animation.

In this type of work, animators pay specific attention to the shape of the mouth as it creates specific vowel and consonant sounds.

When animators look at the sounds coming out of the mouth, the goal is to ensure that the mouth "snaps" to the vowel phoneme sound at the beginning of the word by culling the consonant at the start of the word, with the exception of certain consonants like M, B, and P.

These vowel phonemes at the beginning of words tend to be where the shape of speakers' mouths are most exaggerated and is what we tend to read when we are looking at someone's lips as they are speaking to us.

The second improvement came about because, although the automatic lip-synch technology did a good job, it was not able to distinguish between which phonemes the viewer's brain would ignore when reading the lips; the tech simply generated individual mouth shapes for all phonemes it detected and for each word in a line of dialogue.

This often resulted in very unnatural, jarring mouth movements.

Another evolution of the tech used in Mass Effect 3 meant that the technology was able to detect instances of "jabber jaw," those cases where the automatic lip-synchronization tech was generating phoneme shapes at too high a frequency, leaving characters' lips looking like they were mumbling or teeth like they were chattering.

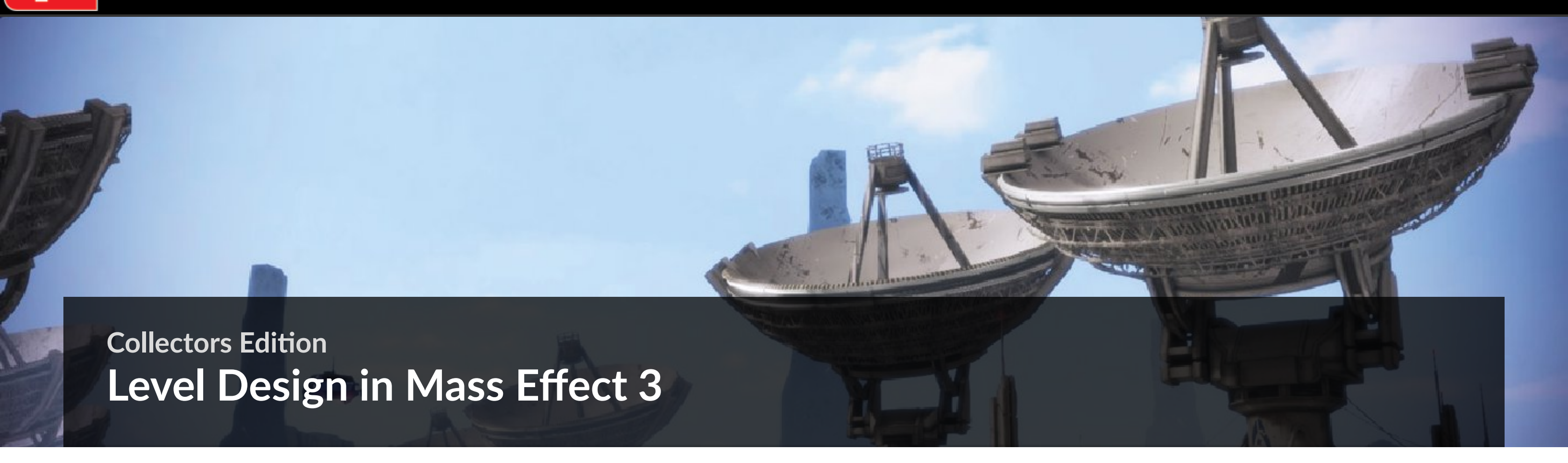
The final step the animators took to ensure the lip-synch was to the highest quality was another process derived from traditional 2-D animation.

Typically, in games, the lips are animated to be precisely synchronized with the dialogue audio they accompany. In 2-D animation, the lips are animated so that the animation triggers slightly before the viewer hears the audio.

This accounts for how the eye and ear each receive data and how the brain processes this data.

The Mass Effect 3 animation team was able to recreate this subtle but noticeable shift, producing lip-synch results that are highly realistic and can satisfy the ultraperceptive human eye.

Through trial-and-error and a lot of iteration, the animation team was able to use a combination of technical horsepower, creative skill, and raw attention to detail to produce nearly perfect lip-synchronization for the dialogue sequences throughout the game.



Level Design in Mass Effect 3

The Level Designer

The act of environment and encounter creation in any level-based action game is an organic, almost mystical process that brings all the disciplines together—artists, programmers, and perhaps most importantly, the level designer.

The level designer is where the "rubber hits the road."

Equal parts architect, combat tactician, builder, and artist, the level designer is responsible for bringing together content, systems, and aesthetics, and then translating these things into an experience that will be fun, challenging, and pleasurable for the player.

More than that, it has to be memorable.

As with many outcomes of high craft, good level design is often invisible; it becomes such an organic outcome of the player's experience of the game that it is indistinguishable from all the other game elements.

There is a cohesion that makes the experience shine, and the player is left with an indescribable sense of everything just feeling "right." In other words, when it works, it just works.

Creating Levels in Mass Effect 1

Mass Effect 1's level design process was largely an outcome of its origins as a spiritual follow-up to Knights of the Old Republic.

In KotOR, the combat systems were still largely based on "die-rolling," meaning, as with the tabletop pen-and-paper RPGs that inspired it, the computer is rolling a die (in this case, triggering a number generator) to determine a relatively random outcome to each combat event.

This all happens outside the player's knowledge. When the player initiates an attack, the game logic calculates the attack's likelihood of being successful based on various parameters and then assigns an outcome—for example, damage to the target.

Mass Effect 1's combat system determined outcomes using a similar system of "rolling the dice," the effect being a combat experience that did not always feel intuitive, satisfying, or responsive to the player.

In fact, under this system, it was entirely possible for players to miss, even though all the visceral feedback provided by the game suggested strongly that there should have been a hit.

Level creation in Mass Effect 1 was also a fairly rudimentary process by the standards of the sequels. Levels were created by artists, with aesthetics considered before the playability of combat.

Level designers provided guidance on where cover objects should be placed, but the placement of those cover objects was still being done by the level artists.

As a result, the levels and layouts looked beautiful and were a pleasure to navigate through but were not always set up ideally for cover placement that would support an optimal combat experience.

Creating Levels in Mass Effect 2

For Mass Effect 2, the gameplay design team wanted to bring the combat gameplay closer to what player's would expect of a shooter.

This would make ranged weapon combat feel more satisfying to the player, which would in turn make the entire gameplay experience more cohesive.

In a pure shooter, the outcome of combat is not based on "die rolls" but rather on real-world notions of line of sight, bullet accuracy, and penetration of armor.

Ray-tracing techniques are used to determine whether an individual projectile hits its target or not: the game calculates the path of the projectile, what lies between it and its target, what the target is doing, and how it is equipped defensively.

The resulting outcome is much more logical, intuitive, and in many ways, and satisfying. Without necessarily being able to articulate exactly why, the combat just feels better to the player.

This approach also made the placement of cover objects much more critical to the end result.

In reviews, Mass Effect 2 was lauded for providing a highly improved combat experience that brought the game in line with players' expectations of a sci-fi-based action RPG.

Level creation in Mass Effect 2 also changed accordingly.

Rather than having artists create the level spaces as in Mass Effect 1, level designers created and iterated on "gray boxes"—level environments with untextured geometry and basic lighting intended to provide a low-cost environment to facilitate iteration on cover placement, line of sight, blockers, portals, access points, and so on.

Only when the levels were deemed ideal spaces for gameplay did the artists begin to beautify. This process tweak resulted in gameplay spaces that were as playable as they were pleasing to look at.

Taking Things to the Next Level in Mass Effect 3

Despite making massive improvements to the combat spaces in Mass Effect 2, the team still felt they could do better.

Using Mass Effect 2 downloadable content modules as test-beds, the team was able to experiment with new ideas and iterate on existing systems to create a combat experience in Mass Effect 3 that eclipsed what had been done in the previous two games.

One way in which combat spaces were improved in the DLC (downloadable content) was by experimenting with line of sight—what the player is able to see from any given position.

In Mass Effect 2, players could enter a combat area, choose a cover point, and fight the majority of the battle from that location.

This put them in a fixed position where mobility was not a factor and meant the combat space was not as dynamic as it could be.

The team addressed this in Mass Effect 3 by creating combat areas that would encourage players to move from location to location.

By placing objects that would block the player's line of sight from a specific location, they would still be able to sense that the combat area extended beyond their current visible range. In effect, they would have a blind spot.

This would encourage them to move from point to point, advancing through the combat space and engaging in a much more dynamic combat experience.

With combat areas being more open, players would have more space to move around utilizing flanking maneuvers, forcing themselves and their enemies to travel around the environment.

By moving around, players would not only expose themselves to enemy fire—raising the threat to them and, correspondingly, the tension and their stress level—but they would engage in a more active navigation of the area, employing skill and tactics in how they use their weaponry and how they exploit the environment to their maximum benefit.

As a result, the combat spaces in Mass Effect 3, and the encounters themselves, offer more choices to the player and more interesting challenges, and it feels much more satisfying to win.

Building Encounters Around Themes

In order to evolve the encounters in Mass Effect 3, the team needed to take a different approach.

Rather than creating spaces like dungeons and simply populating them with enemies and asking players to fight these enemies as they passed through the area, encounters would be imbued with stronger contextualization through regular objective updates for the player.

The player would always be given a clear goal to accomplish, and the enemies would stand between them and that goal.

This simple but fundamental shift in the encounter-design philosophy for Mass Effect 3 led the team to another realization: that their strongest levels and encounters were unified through common themes.

Building experiences around themes provided cohesion to the player experience and was a process that ranged from macro to micro in scale.

Everything from the overall context wrapper, to subplots and character arcs, all the way down to individual moments and mission objectives played a roll in this.

Exploration Movement

In Mass Effect 3, the team introduced a new paradigm to their development of game levels: exploration movement.

Ladders, jumps, and drop-downs provide variety for the player and would allow the game environments to unfold along both vertical and horizontal axes.

This was in contrast to levels in Mass Effect 1 and 2, which were unable to provide major height variations without including long ramps, something few level environments could support.

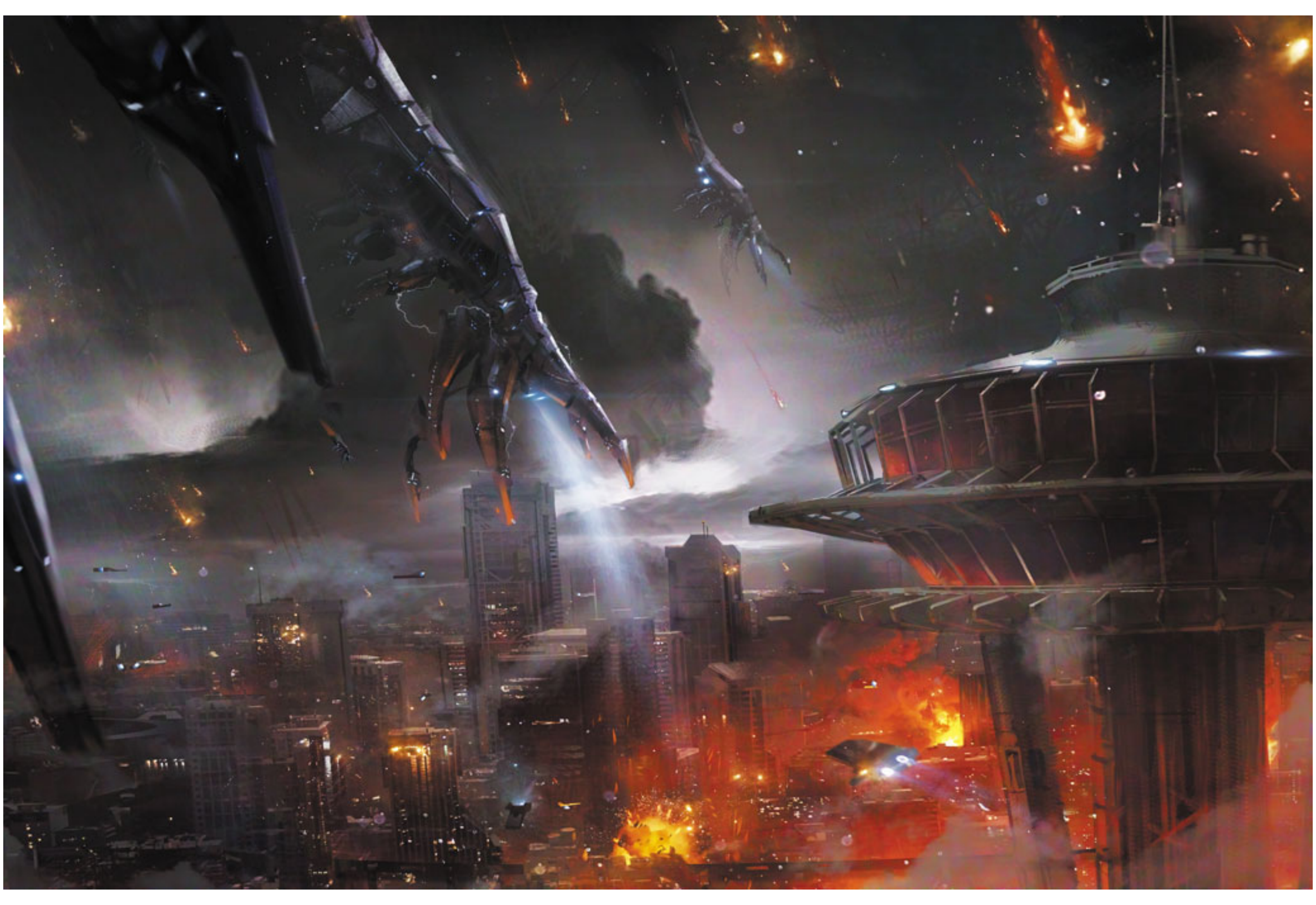
The inclusion of ladders alone had a huge impact on the team's ability to create interesting, multilevel layouts, as ladders could easily be accommodated in almost any type of space and provided a great deal of flexibility.

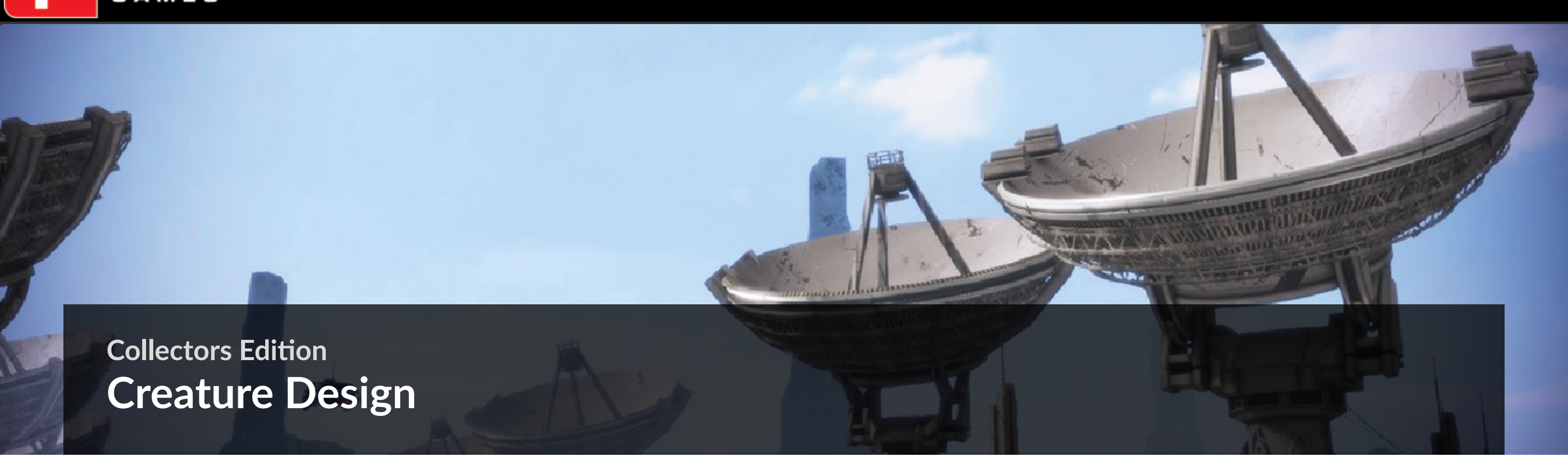
This also meant that encounters could exploit multiple tiers—enemies could approach and fire upon the player from varying heights, creating more dynamic and engaging combat spaces that push players to deal with threats on both the vertical and horizontal planes.

"Level design is about providing the player with interesting choices, but not too many at the same time. These choices must have interesting consequences for the player."

Bastiaan Frank, Lead Level Designer, Mass Effect 3

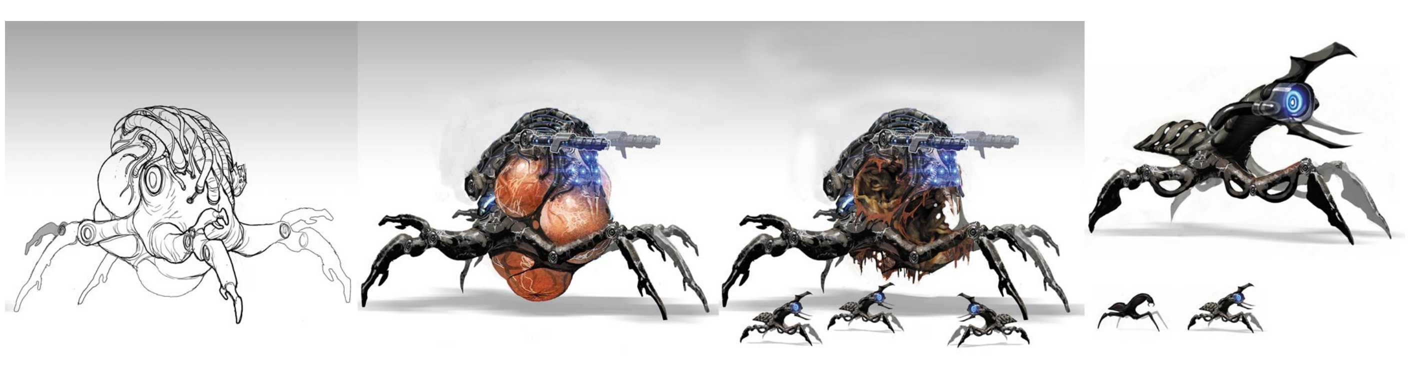
Ravager





Collectors Edition

Creature Design



A successful combat system depends on a clear and compelling relationship between the tools the player is given and interesting opportunities to use—and master—those tools.

With all the enhancements to Mass Effect 3's combat experience—through stronger level design, greater breadth in the weapon modification systems, improved weapon feedback, and so on—the biggest change came in the form of the enemies themselves.

As with other areas of the game, what players experience in Mass Effect 3 is the result of an evolution through the previous two games and accompanying downloadable content (DLC).

With Mass Effect 1, players were fighting what essentially amounted to sci-fi skins on common Dungeons & Dragons–type enemies.

With a stronger core of shooter gameplay, Mass Effect 2 introduced additional enemy types, yet most were variants on standard bipedal humanoids, all toting guns, and combat occasionally suffered from a feeling of "sameness".

All enemies fell into three categories of behavior: enemies that would use cover, enemies that closed distance and used melee attacks, and enemies that ran at the player, shooting.

On top of this, the enemy profiles—the shape and color of enemies, which is how players identify the different threats they face onscreen—tended to blend together.

For Mass Effect 3, the team knew they needed to up the ante with creature design. This increased focus was formalized through assigning a full-time designer solely to creatures for the duration of the project.

The new approach identified clear and distinct roles for each enemy type. Roles defined clear goals for the creatures, with unique behaviors (gameplay actions driven by AI) created to support these goals.

Beyond this, many creatures were also given discreet weaknesses—for example, the Guardian's shield can be knocked away, and destroying the Ravager's "sacks" prevents them from spawning new enemies.

This gives players opportunities to develop new tactics and discover the optimal ways to overcome the various enemies.

Through roles, each enemy would introduce a new power into the combat dialogue. For example, some would push the player into cover; others would force them out. Some would approach slowly, soaking up damage and presenting a great threat if they made it up close.

This allowed the designers to play with parameters like time and distance when building encounters; some enemies would become more dangerous the closer they came to you, others would become more dangerous the longer they were left alone, and so on.

Presenting these enemies together in interesting combinations would form the basis of the improved encounter design in Mass Effect 3. Players would be given a true combat puzzle to solve.

Enemies were also given a variety of ways to move and approach the player—for example, rocket boots allowing them to fly up or down, leaping, climbing walls, and so on—adding dynamism to the combat and making them look interesting while simultaneously keeping players on their toes.

Many of them would have a way to force themselves into the player's combat space, a custom "entrance" that would surprise the player and challenge them to engage and use all their own skills—as well as the Shepard's abilities and arsenal—to fight, and win.

Combat Example from Biotic Student Rescue Mission

At position A, a fixed turret cannot move but is highly dangerous if you are exposed to its fire. You enter the space, coming under fire from the turret, and take cover in position B.

Mobile enemies attempt to flank your position, forcing you to engage and exit your protective cover. You are again vulnerable to the turret.

Your task is to find the best way to exploit the environment, the weapons in your arsenal, and your abilities and those of your allies to destroy the enemies you face.

Animating Combat and Creatures

One of the great improvements to the creature animation process in Mass Effect 3 was the ability for the gameplay design team to iterate on creature behaviors almost immediately, whereas they historically had to wait for animations to be created before they could test creature behavior out.

The ability to test quickly allowed for more and faster iteration, working toward a good result before committing costly animation resources.

The combat designers start with a "box creature," which essentially is a series of different sized boxes joined together to create the sense of a head, torso, limbs, and so on.

Using this simplistic creature, designers could experiment with timing of movement and attacks, pacing, and speed.

In parallel, the animators build an animation tree, a kind of blueprint that outlines the various movement capabilities of a character and the relationship between the various subanimations that comprise the action.

Once the combat designers understand, in rough terms, what the combat gameplay requires a particular character or creature to be able to do, the animation team works closely with them to find ways to visualize this through movement.

This is a close collaboration that involves both artistry and highly technical skills.

It is a constant balancing act between what looks natural and effective versus how quickly a certain move needs to be carried out in order to satisfy the gameplay requirements.

An incredible amount of tuning is involved with finding this often nuanced "sweet spot."

The process unfolds in phases. Phase one involves animators putting rough posing and timing into place, the idea being to establish a basic set of motions so that the designers can tweak and tune as quickly as possible.

At this point, the character is simply a set of boxes.

The designers are able to integrate and tweak these animations quickly to bring the character to a baseline functionality and understand the scope and type of motion that the character requires.

Once the designer and animator are satisfied with the basic motion, the animator can move to the next phase, which involves adding layers to the existing animation, secondary movement that will help smooth out the actions and make them flow more naturally and seamlessly from one to the other.

At this point, timing has been locked down and the combat designers can tune, provided the animation does not get broken.

The third and final phase involves animators going in and polishing the final animations to ensure they achieve a shippable quality.

Animators often work from reference material. Sometimes this includes films and sometimes they will act out certain motions and record them for future reference.

For Mass Effect 3's combat animation, the team reviewed footage of soldiers moving.

Shepard's movement befits a soldier—a confident stride, quick movement when he needs to get into or out of cover, and dexterous reactions without being too agile (he's not a ninja, after all).

With his expanded movement set in Mass Effect 3 (e.g., being able to slide into cover), the team added some parkour influences to his movement set.

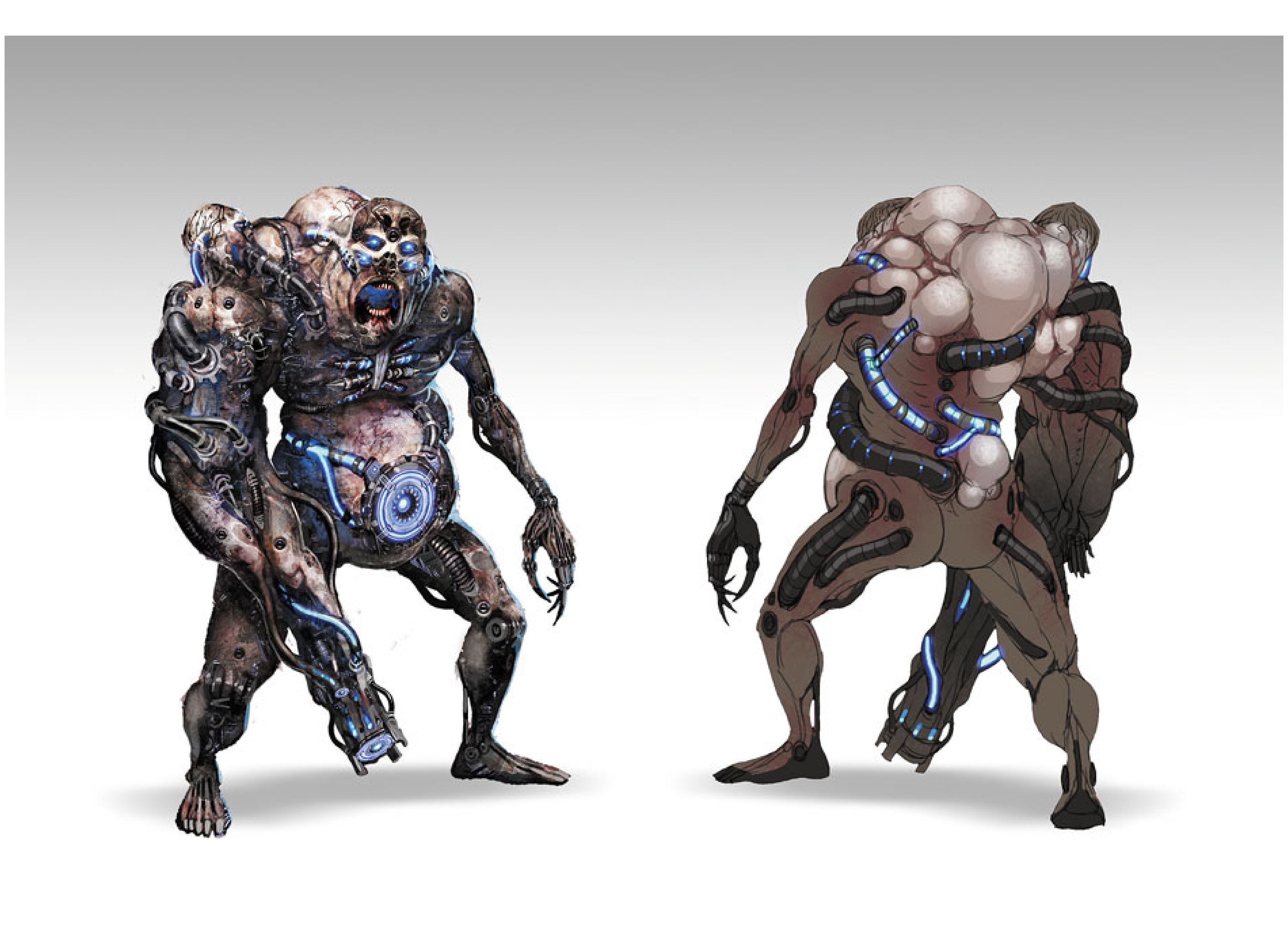
For some of Shepard's melee actions, the team referred to footage of Krav Maga, the martial art developed by the Israeli Defense Forces.

Weapon reloads in games need to be very fast, as your character will suffer if the process takes too long, leading to player frustration; however, there is also an expectation that the animations will make the character look compelling and will telegraph status without the player really needing to pay close attention.

In other words, players want to feel cool when they are reloading, but they want it to happen quickly so they can get back into the fight. They don't want to have to wonder if the movement is finished or not.

The weapon reload animations in Mass Effect 3 enjoyed a major overhaul.

The team referred to footage of "speed-loading" competitions—an actual competitive sport where firearms enthusiasts attempt to load various weapons as quickly as possible in a kind of timed race.



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The Future of Interactive Storytelling

The future of storytelling in games is going to involve players in new ways through different types of interfaces and different ways to engage with the game.

New formats and technologies will enable new delivery methods; for example, gamers might stream games through their televisions.

The player experience, and particularly how it relates to narrative presentation and player involvement, will need to be built from the ground up to account for these evolutions in the medium.

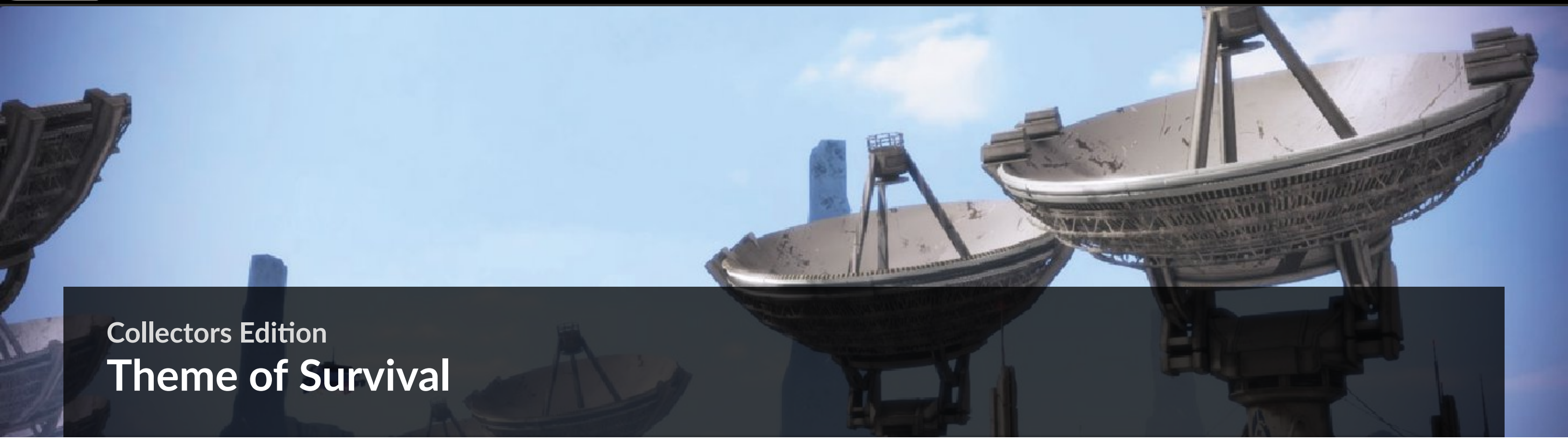
Mass Effect 3's inclusion of voice commands, supported by the Xbox 360 Kinect, provide a glimpse of future interactive storytelling.

When players converse with AI-controlled characters, they are able to actually speak with them and focus more on the conversation, without needing to rely on a traditional controller to select the next piece of dialogue.

It feels more natural and can help players become more invested in the characters and the world. The act of actually speaking to a character does more to stimulate a player's mind.

In the future, people may look back at the traditional control methods and say to themselves "That was the old way."

—In conversation with Casey Hudson



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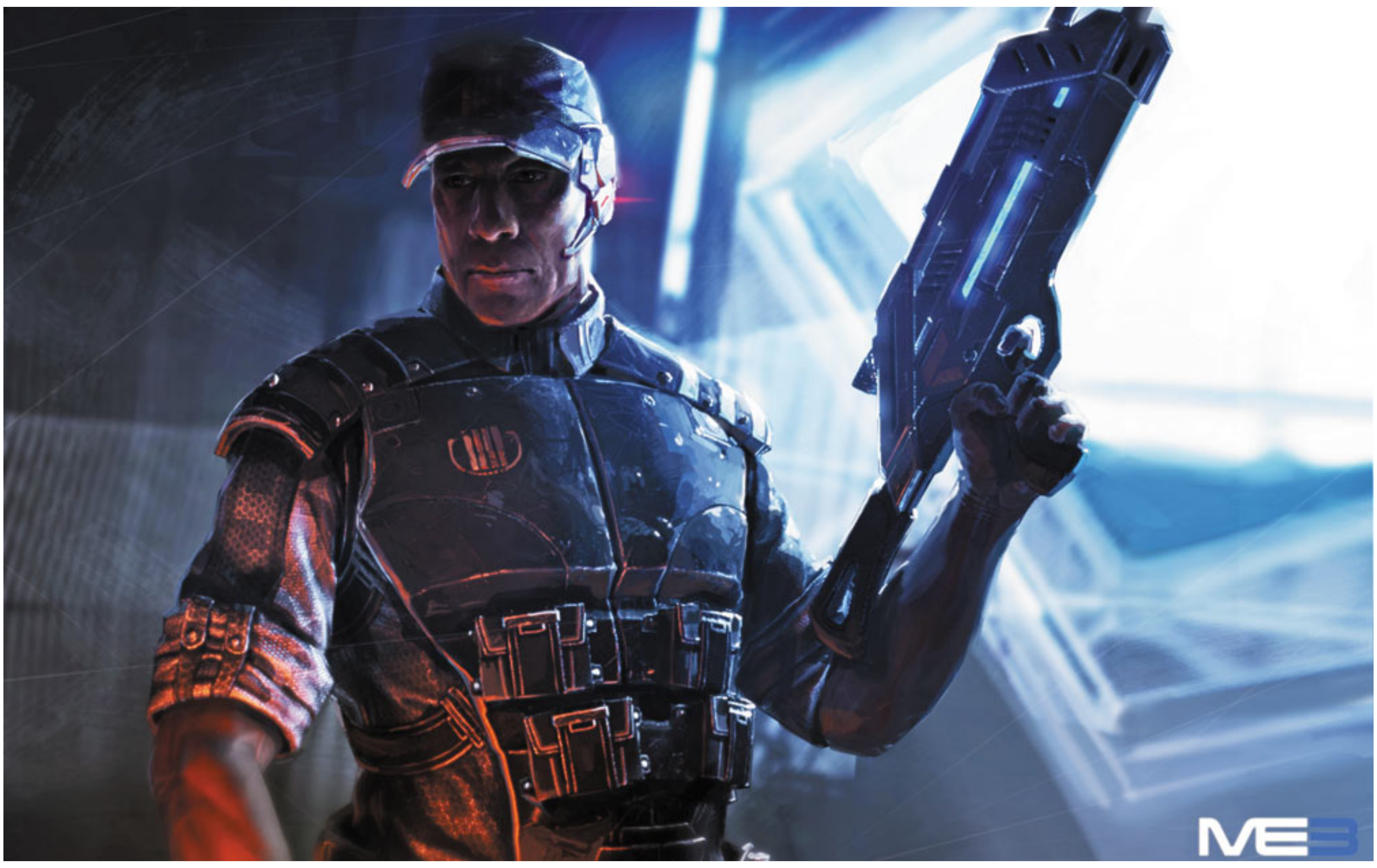
Theme of Survival



The Mass Effect 3 team wanted to channel an even stronger sense of urgency and high-stakes for Shepard and the human race, building on the intensity of the previous Mass Effect games while bringing Shepard's story to a resounding crescendo.

The team drew inspiration from World War II to develop the tone and themes for Mass Effect 3.

They wanted the game to feature a large-scale conflict that would pull various disparate factions together and unite them under difficult circumstances to fight a common enemy. The theme for the game, therefore, became one of survival.

This theme unified all the campaigns, levels, and encounters in Mass Effect 3.

In the game's stunning opening mission, Earth experiences the Reaper invasion firsthand, making the story personal for the player by raising the stakes for all of mankind. During development, the survival theme for this mission was "Rome is burning", with players having to escape and then reluctantly leave the cradle of humanity to pursue an even greater responsibility thrust upon them.

The theme of survival within the massive galactic conflict carries throughout the game. Within the safety of the Citadel, civilians chatter about how the war has affected them, providing players with various points of view on the conflict.

Combat is intense, raging within massive set-piece battles that serve as constant reminders of threat the galaxy faces.

Gameplay systems like the "Galaxy at War" metagame involve the player's actions in gathering support and material for the liberation of Earth.

Even subplots, such as the krogan's relentless pursuit of a cure for the genophage, focus on survival. Collecting these war assets are vital to Shepard saving the galaxy.

Even the Normandy, the player's home base and secondary avatar in the game, returns in a much leaner, meaner form than the gratuitously sleek Cerberus Normandy from Mass Effect 2.

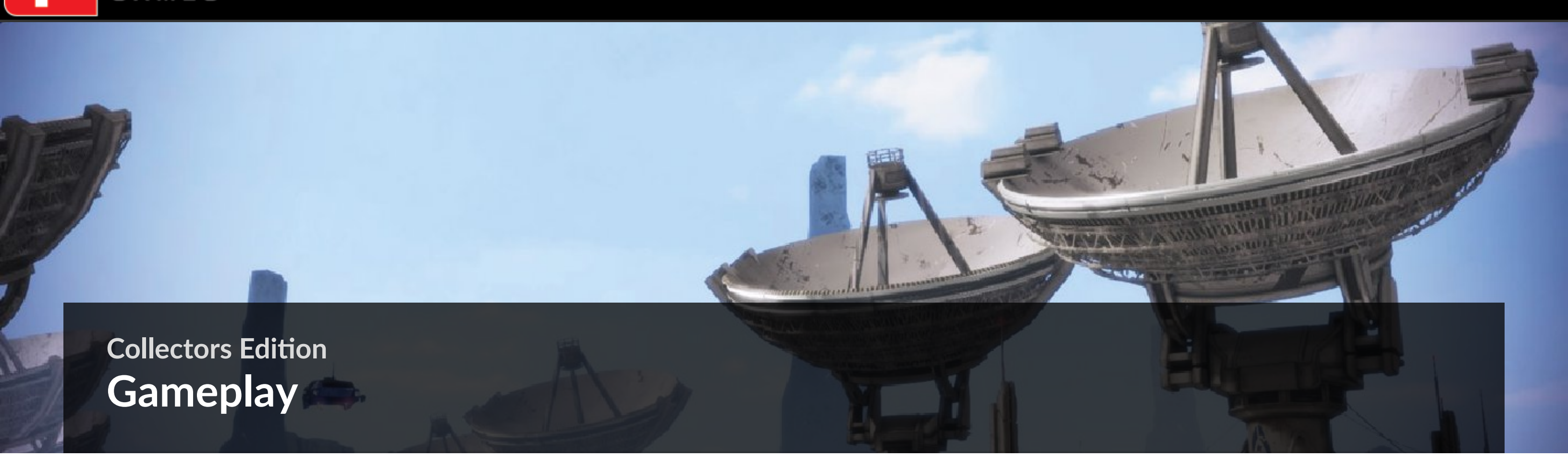
The retrofitted Normandy in Mass Effect 3 is utilitarian, intensely focused, and ready for battle—a warship in the spirit of the classic WWII battleships.

In addition, soldiers are more prevalent than scientists on this mission. Even talented biotic students on a distant school ship become a weapon in humanity's arsenal against the Reapers.

It is up to the player to marshal their resources and hone them into a sharp spear point with which to strike at the heart of the Reapers.

The theme of survival is strongly present in all areas of the game. It is communicated through the art direction, the music, the plot, the dialogue, the environment design, the levels, all the way down to the encounters themselves.

This strong cohesion of game elements makes this third and final chapter in Shepard's story the strongest expression of Mass Effect's creative and thematic ideals set forth in the first game nearly five years ago.



Collectors Edition

Gameplay

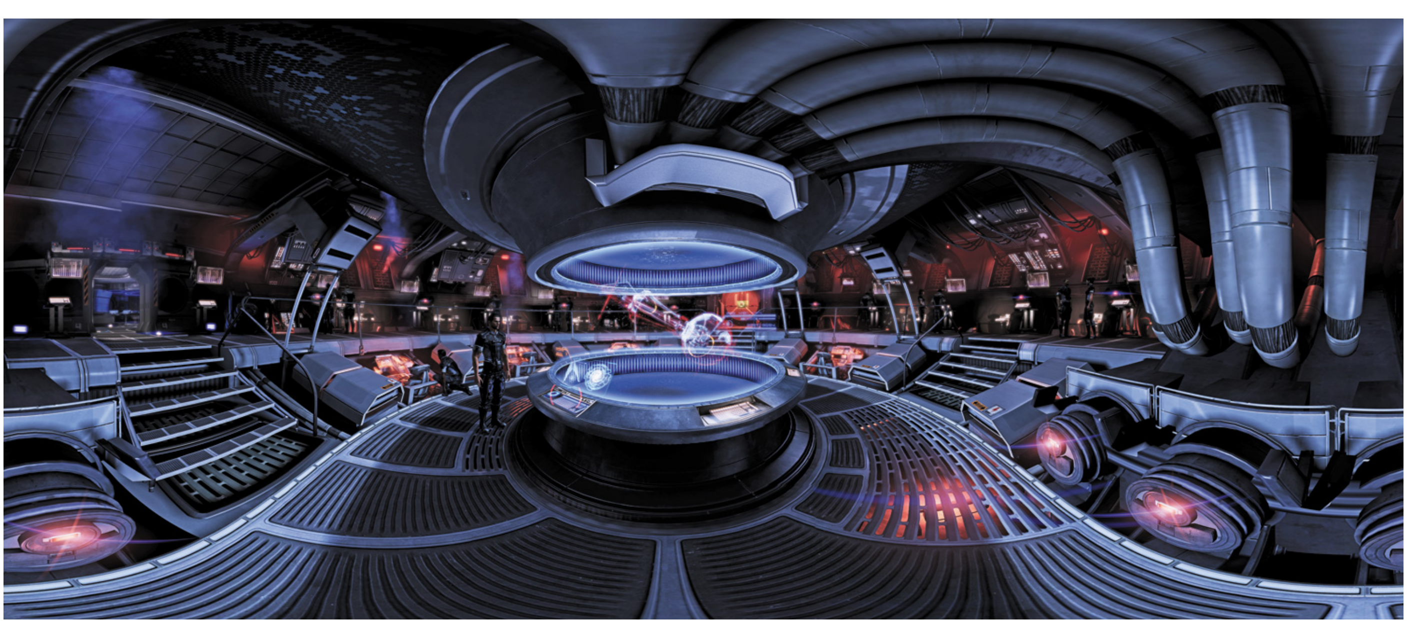
Strong Player Association

From its inception, Mass Effect was intended to be an action-oriented role-playing game, or action-RPG, based within the third-person shooter genre.

In third-person shooters, players can see their character onscreen, as opposed to first-person shooters, where players mainly see their hands and the weapon they're holding.

The benefit of third-person games is that players can see their character on the screen at all times; in many cases, this creates a stronger bond between the player and the character they are controlling.

This was particularly important to the team at BioWare, since their focus on storytelling, character development, and allowing the player to create their own Shepard meant the player would see their creation and feel an even stronger emotional connection to the hero they were playing, since they had created it themselves.



RPG Roots

Having just finished Knights of the Old Republic to massive critical and commercial success, the gameplay team approached the original Mass Effect from a very RPG-centric point of view.

This meant a lot of the gameplay, and combat in particular, was very statistics-based: the player's abilities, the characteristics of a weapon, any kind of upgrade or modification made to ammunition, accuracy, and so on.

These elements all defined the player experience more than a player's skill or whether a particular action "felt good." The designers creating these stats-based systems were referred to as "systems designers."

In Mass Effect 2, the gameplay team worked to better integrate third-person-shooter mechanics that were more about "feel" than about statistics.

This meant the player experience became focused on gameplay: the way the player's control of character, camera, and systems, combined with the visual and auditory representation of the action (animation, visual effects, sound effects, etc.) resulted in an experience within the game that was challenging but enjoyable.

The designers creating these experiences became known as "gameplay designers."

For Mass Effect 3, the team asked themselves how they could take the gameplay experience, and combat in particular, even further than they had in Mass Effect 2.

They implemented an enhanced weapons-modification system to give players the opportunity to experiment and extract even more gameplay value from each gun in the game.

They added increased mobility with actions like sliding, melee, combat rolls, and climbing. They fleshed out the cover-based gameplay of Mass Effect 2 and overhauled the character ability systems.

The Mass Effect 2 team had three gameplay designers. On Mass Effect 3, that number increased to six.

Mass Effect 1 was an excellent role-playing game, and the team's first cover-based third-person shooter.

With Mass Effect 2, combat gameplay evolved to be competitive with other premiere shooters. Mass Effect 3 is the culmination of the previous two games in that it is both an excellent RPG and an excellent action game—the ultimate synthesis of key learnings and an evolution of process and developer skill over the course of the Mass Effect franchise.

Evolving Abilities

The ability system in Mass Effect 1 gave players a range of choices between statistics-based abilities and gameplay-based abilities.

The fact that the technology enabled physics-driven gameplay had a huge impact on the way the biotic abilities were conceived and presented in the game.

These types of physics-driven abilities, like picking up an enemy and throwing them across a room with your mind, lent themselves naturally to being more gameplay-focused than statistics-focused.

In Mass Effect 2, the gameplay team shifted the abilities system to emphasize gameplay-focused abilities nearly exclusively.

All abilities would have a visual outcome that could be perceived by the player and would not have effects that were hidden "under the hood."

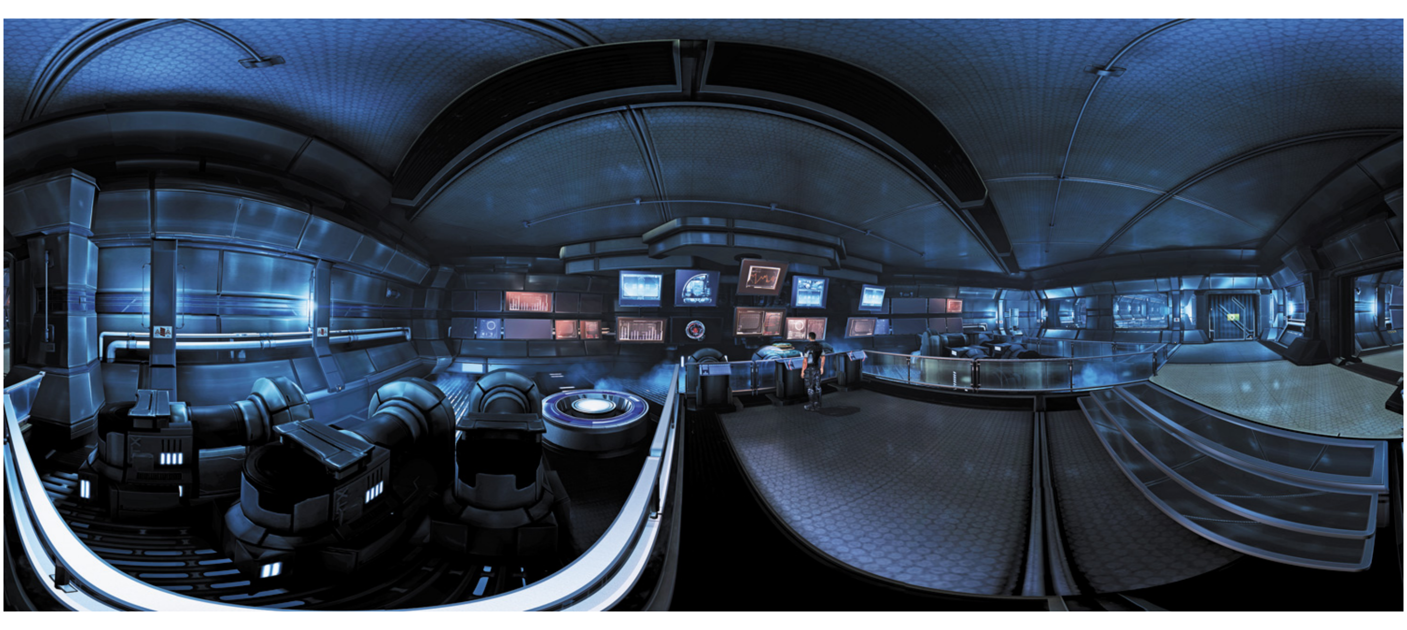
A Design Philosophy

"To me, an RPG is about debate. One of my combat designers will come to me and say, 'Half the people love the shotgun, and half of them hate it,' and I'll tell him, 'Then you're done. It's a good weapon.'

"But when everyone loves it or everyone hates it, you have a problem. The same logic applies to the abilities system, how players choose to build out their particular class.

Being able to debate your choices and defend them to other players, justifying your particular play style—this is at the heart of being an RPG."

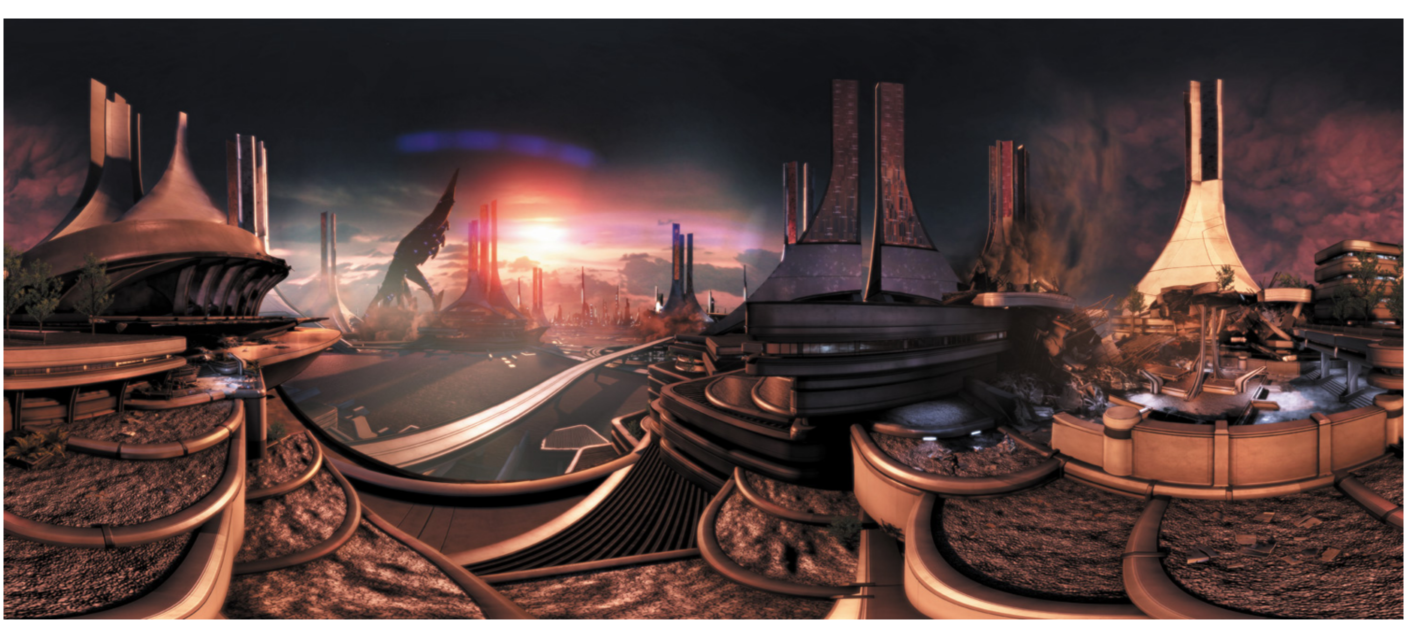
—Preston Watamaniuk, Lead Designer

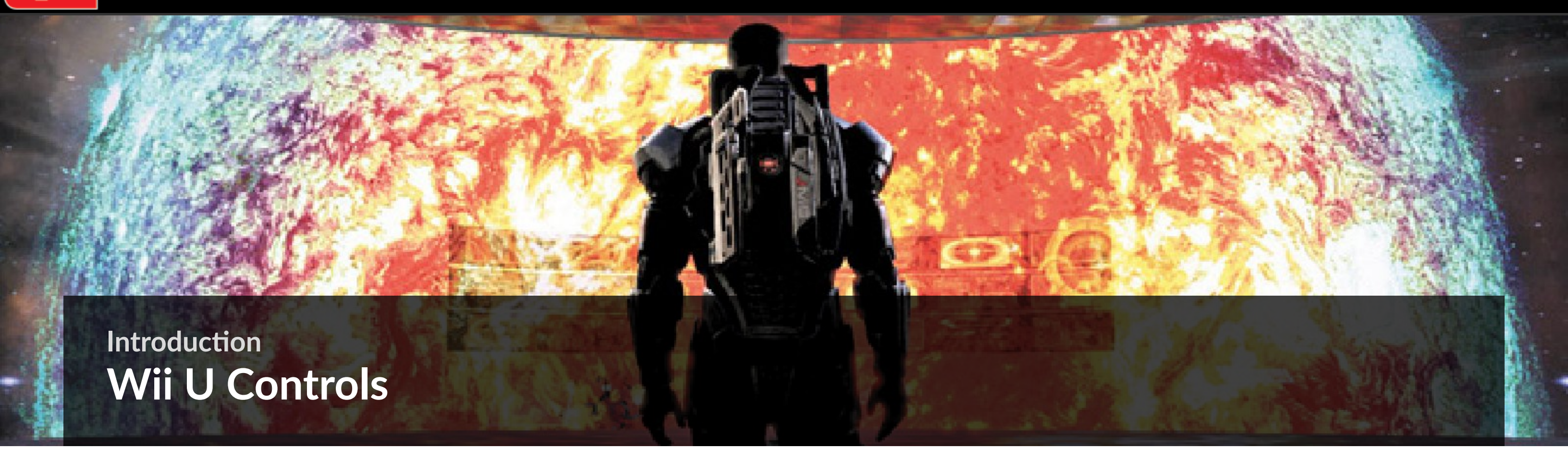


The Many Stories of Mass Effect

The Mass Effect 1 team spent the entire first year of the project developing the universe of Mass Effect. Their goal: to create a space within which they could tell dozens of interesting stories.

The Mass Effect trilogy is Shepard's story, told inside the Mass Effect universe. But the universe is rich and diverse, with many more stories to tell.

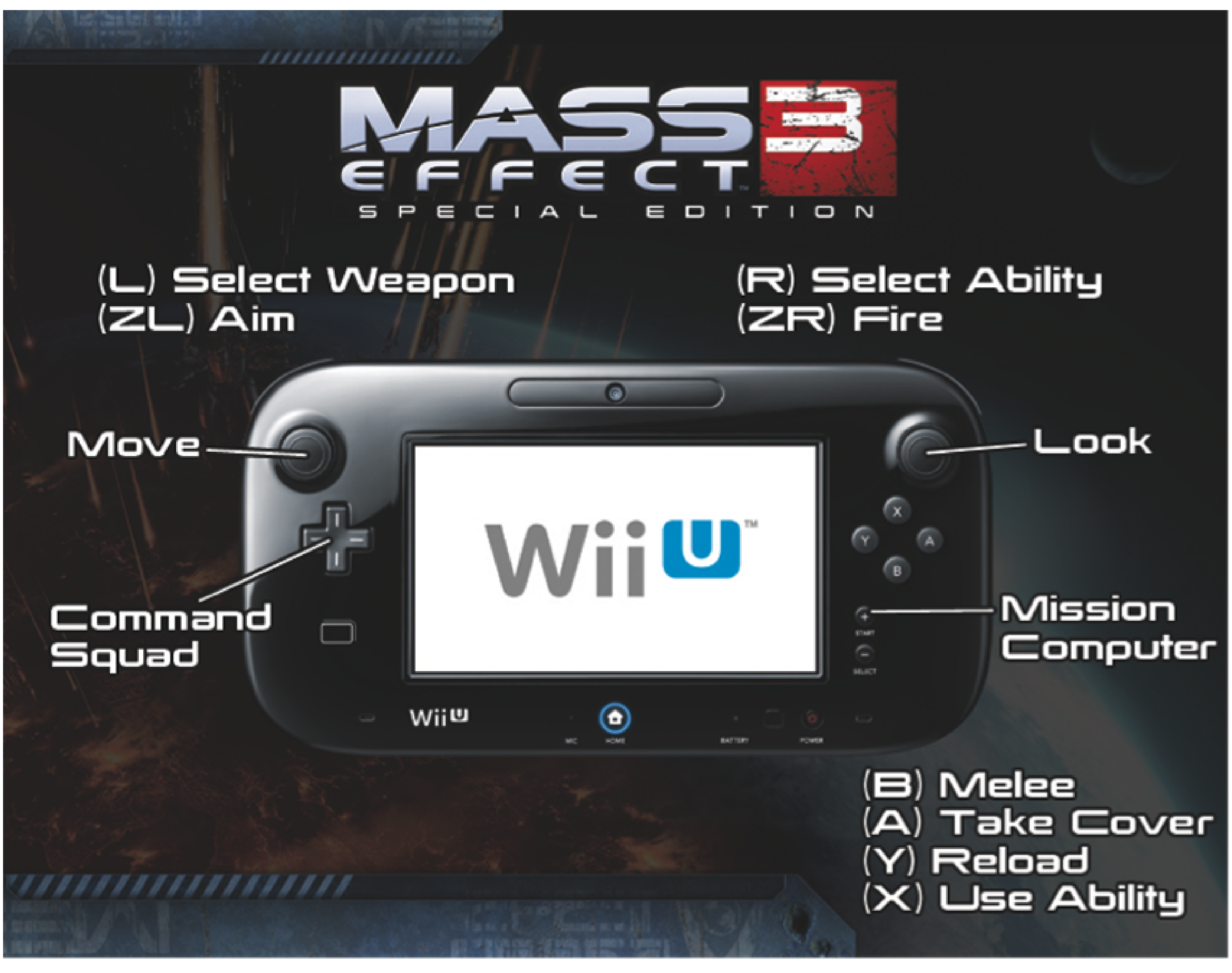




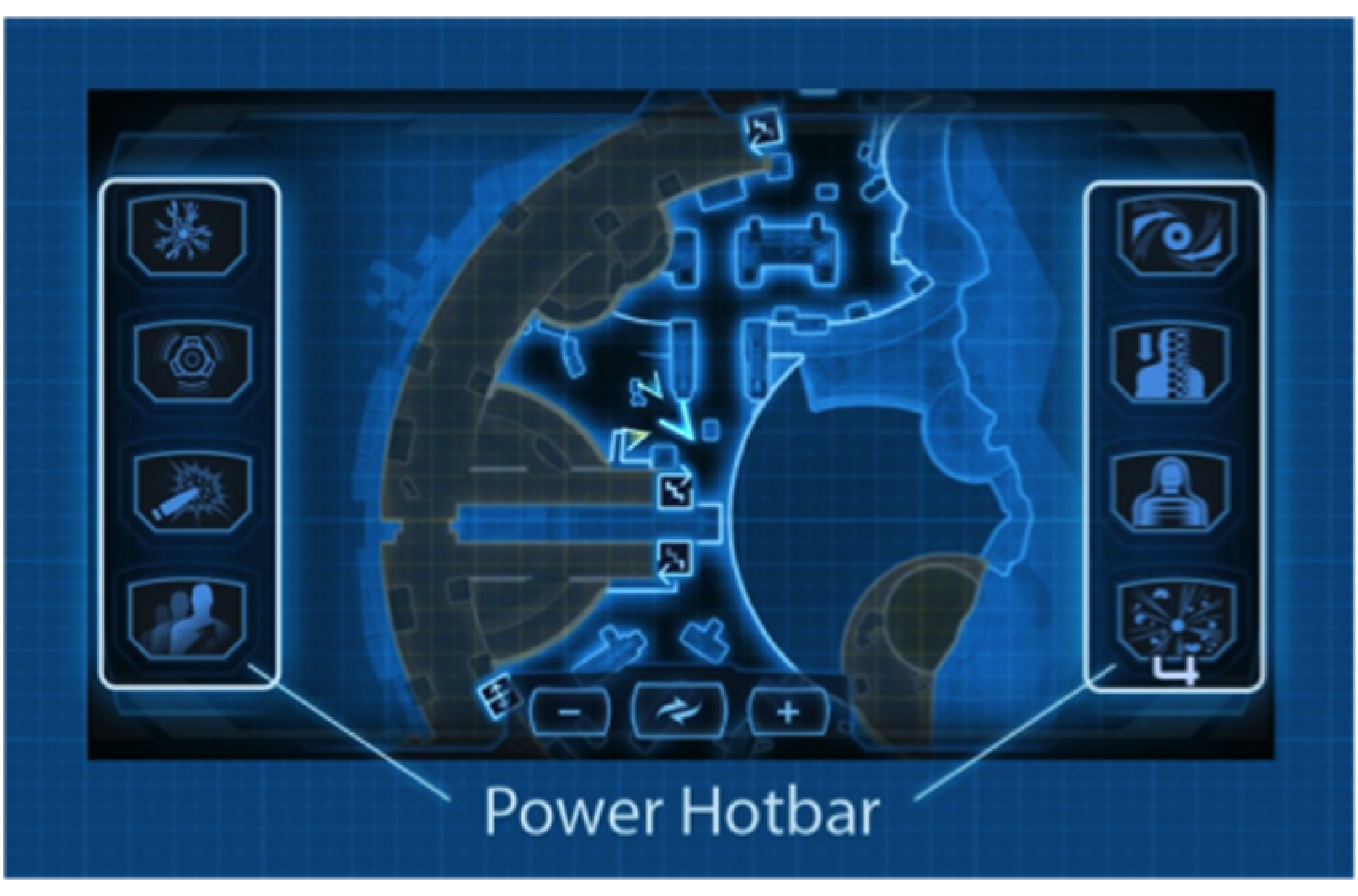
Introduction

Wii U Controls

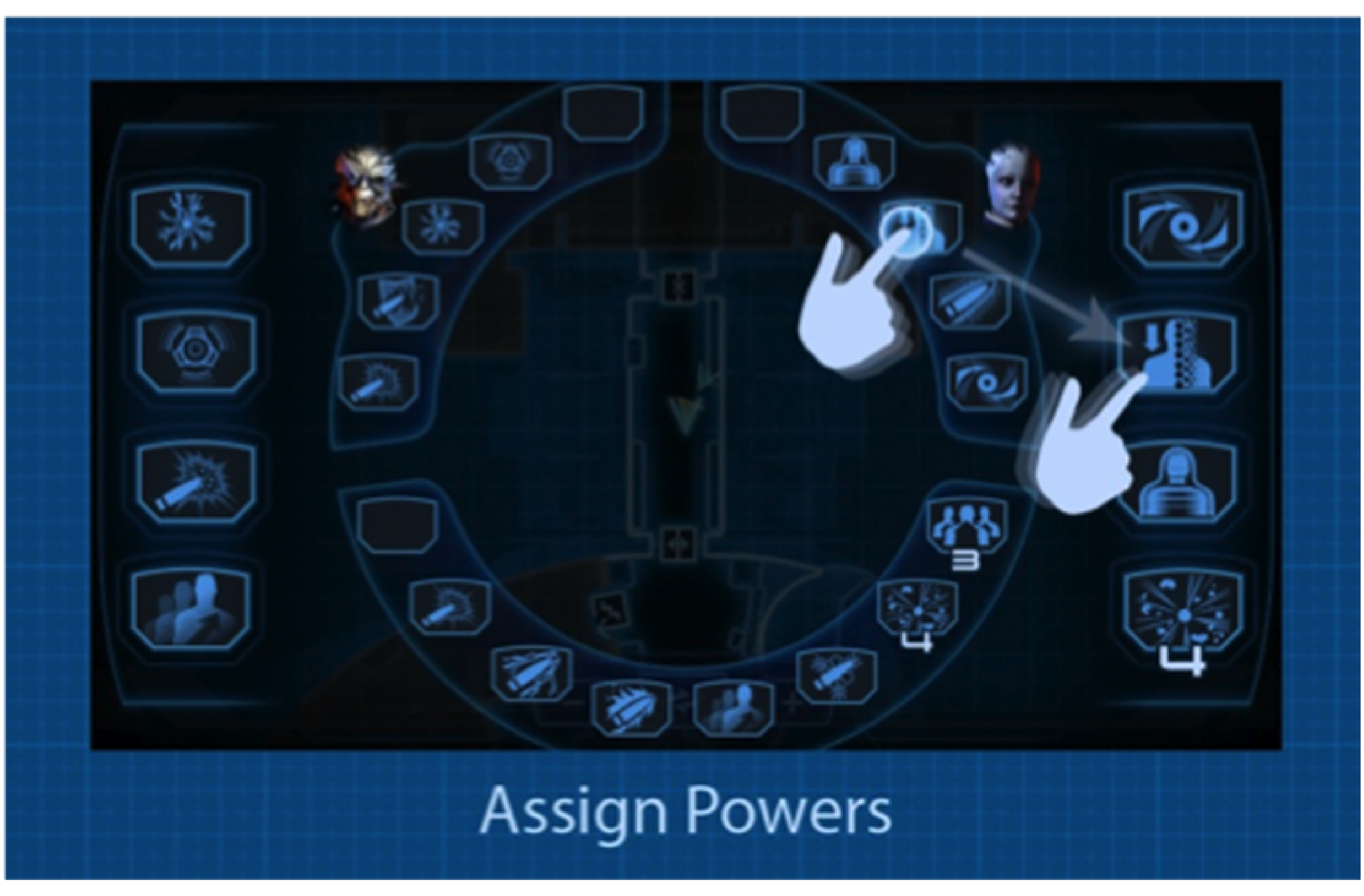
Controller Information


MASS EFFECT 3
SPECIAL EDITION
(L) Select Weapon
(ZL) Aim
(R) Select Ability
(ZR) Fire
Move
Look
Command Squad
Mission Computer
Wii U
(B) Melee
(A) Take Cover
(Y) Reload
(X) Use Ability

Powers:

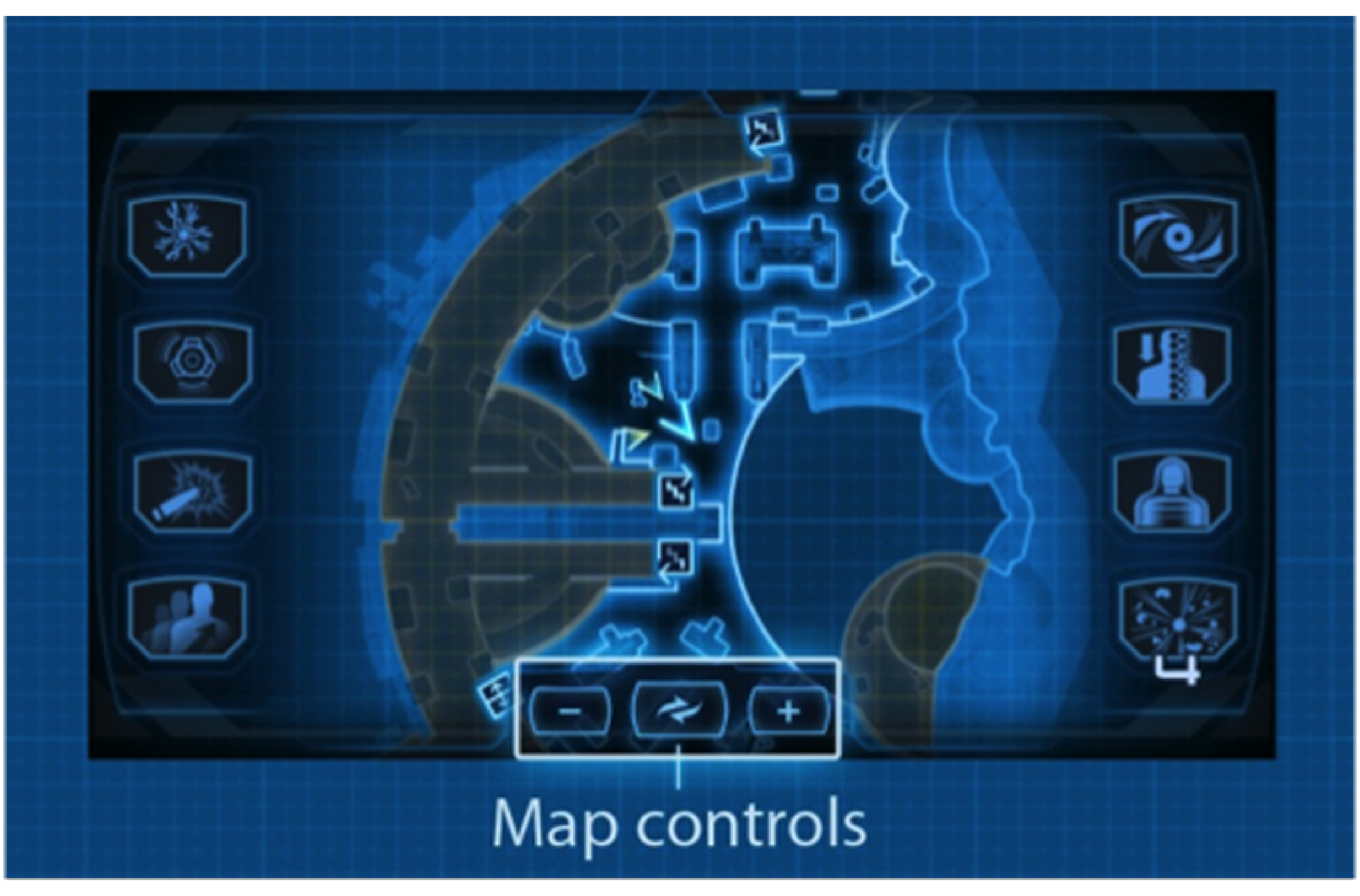

Power Hotbar

The player is able to cast powers using the power hotbars located on the left and right of the touchscreen and can assign powers to the hotbar by pressing the start/+ button on the Controller which will pause the game and bring up the power wheel on the touchscreen.


Assign Powers

The player can now select and drag powers onto the desired hotbar slot. If a power has already been assigned to a slot, dragging a new power to the same slot will overwrite the previous association.

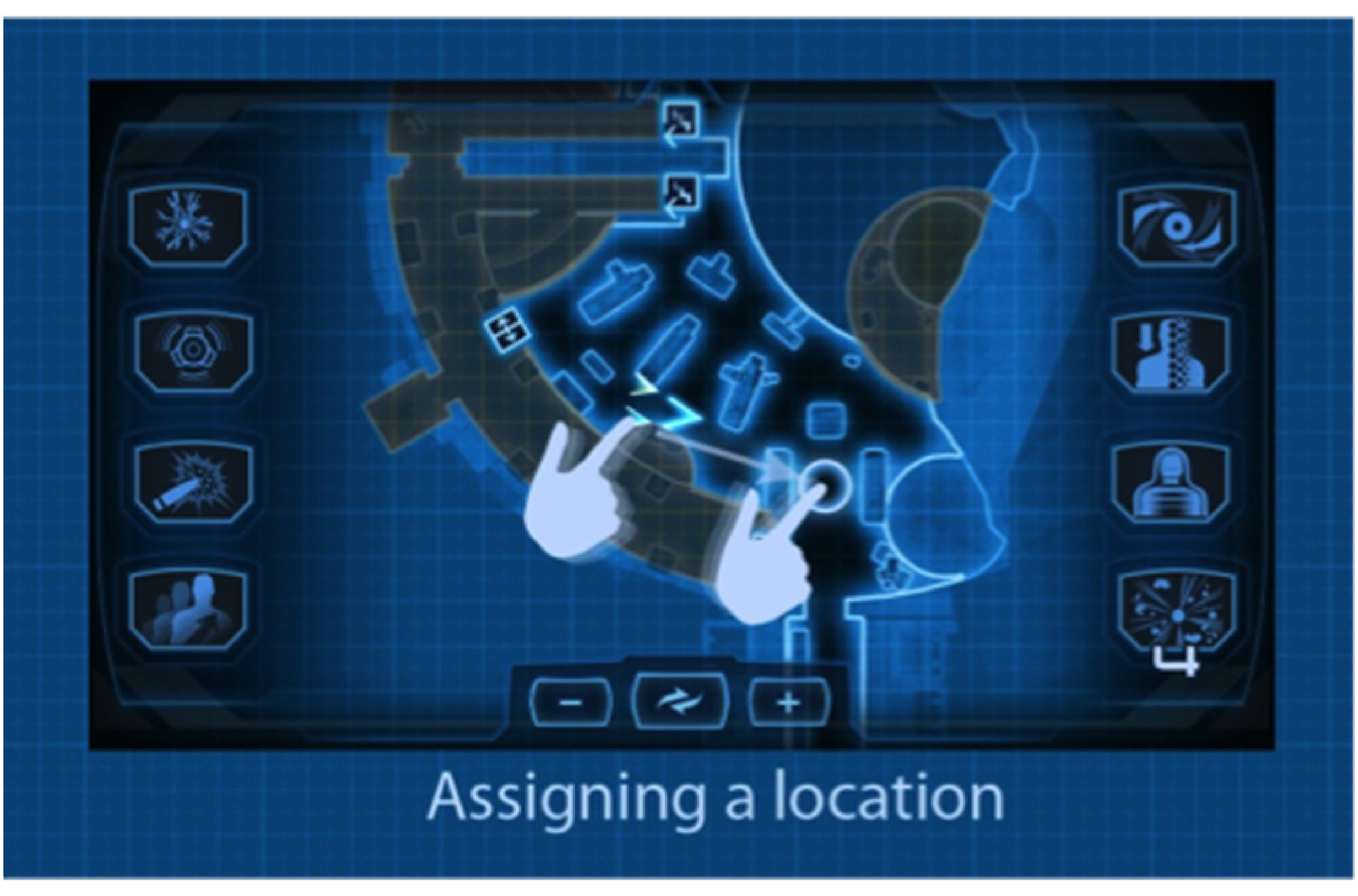
Map controls:

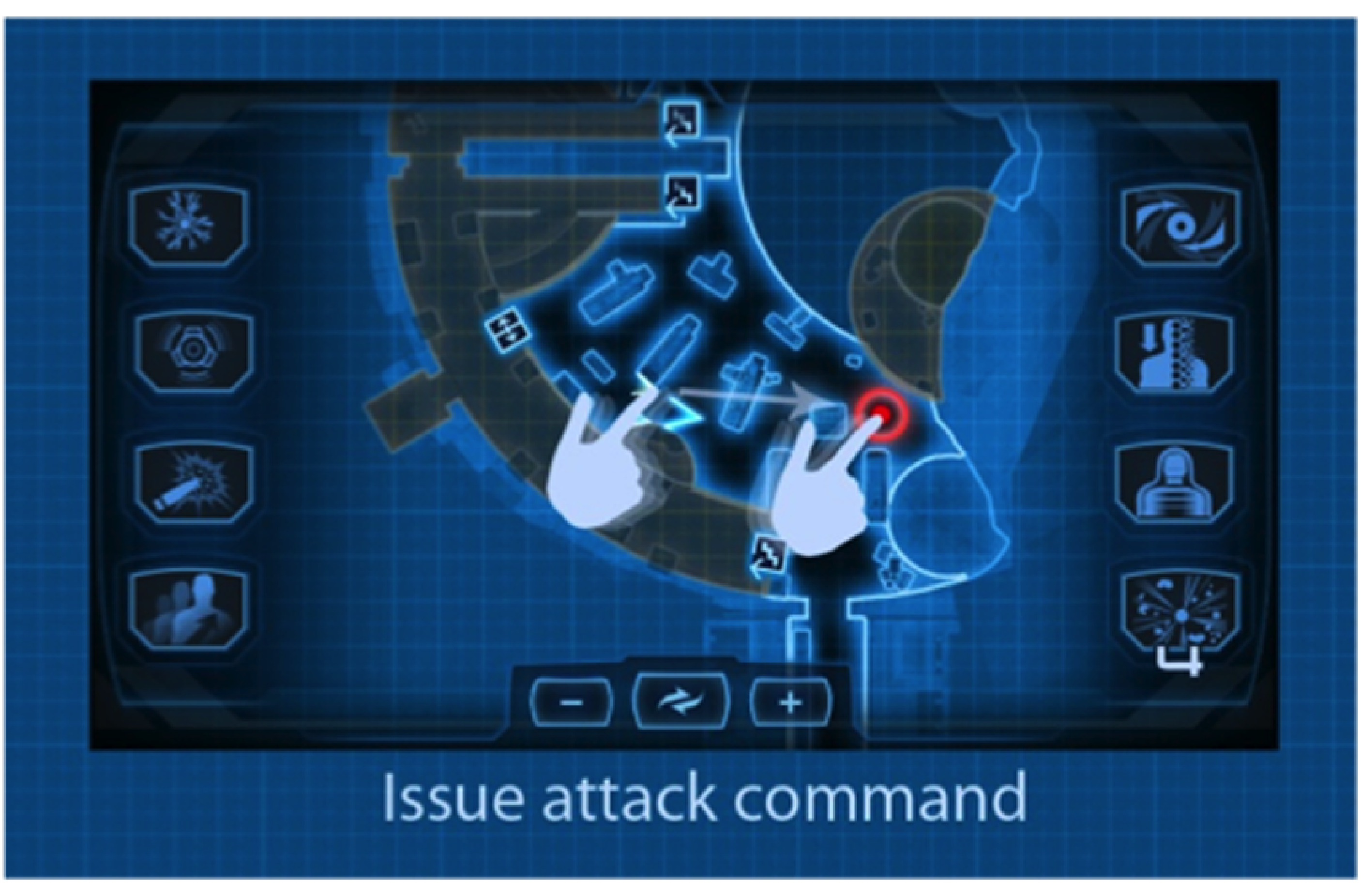

Map controls

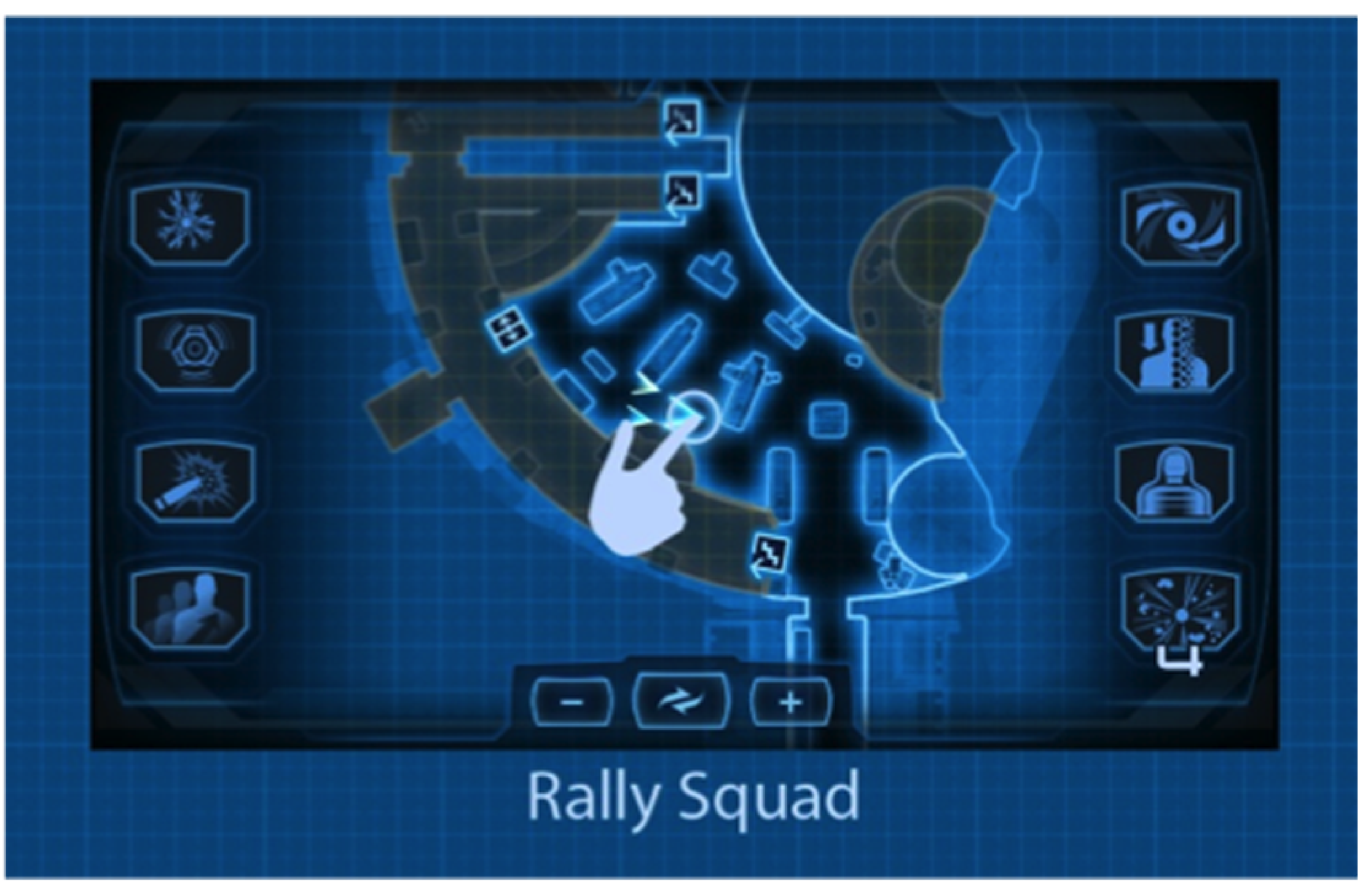
In addition to assigning and casting powers, the touchscreen also allows the player to zoom in and out of the minimap (the minimap is another WiiU exclusive feature) and change the maps orientation to either true north or player north. In addition, the player is able to drag the map by tapping on the map and dragging it into the direction they wish to see.

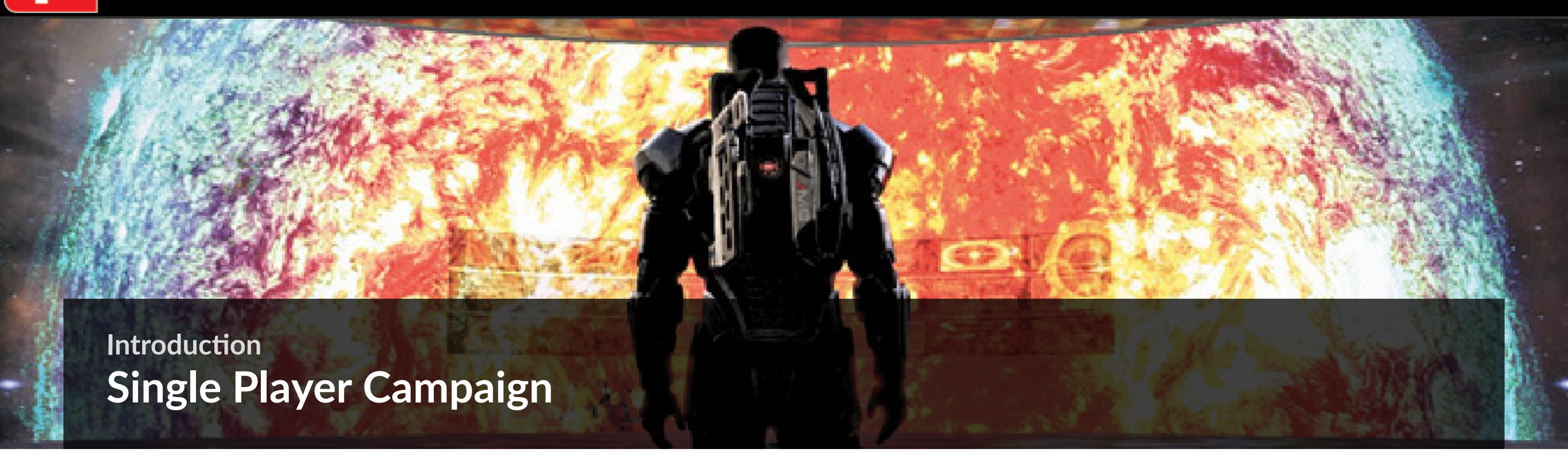
Henchmen orders:

Henchmen orders can also be issued using the touchscreen of the WiiU controller. By tapping on a henchman and dragging to a point on the map, the henchman will be assigned a new location. If the player drags onto an enemy, the henchman receives an attack order. Tapping on the player icon (the large cyan colored arrow) all henchmen receive the order to rally.


Assigning a location


Issue attack command


Rally Squad



Introduction

Single Player Campaign

Players, new or old, who want to experience the rich, complex tale of Mass Effect 3 should begin with the single-player campaign.

In the Campaign section, we've broken down the game to just the critical path, or "Priority", missions.

These are the missions that must be completed in order to experience the main story only. However, each mission is broken down even further so you can get the most out of your game.

MISSION OPENER

At the beginning of every mission is a carefully constructed "preparation" section comprised of several smaller sections. The first is the mission opener, which has several components:

Mission name broken down by act and mission title: "Act 1—Priority: Sur'Kesh," for example.

- **Mission description:** This will recap what you've accomplished thus far and what the mission goal is.
- **Mission Screens:** Several screens will highlight the action and familiarize you with some of the key battle locations you may encounter.
- Though it may not be a wealth of information, the mission opener will give you a glimpse of what you're in for.

MISSION BRIEFING

The "Mission Briefing" section breaks down two key components of each mission: the battlegrounds overview and consequence overviews.

Battlegrounds: This subsection of the Mission Briefing will reveal what types of terrain and enemies you will encounter during the upcoming mission.

It will tell you whether the areas you will encounter are narrow halls, wide-open battlegrounds, debris-covered cities, or complex multileveled facilities.

Furthermore, it may also tell you about what kinds of enemies you'll encounter. On occasion, you'll even get recommendations on what types of classes, weapons, or squadmates will be most helpful during your mission.

Everything in this section is meant to help you prepare all battle scenarios you may encounter.

Consequence Overviews: This subsection lightly covers the general types of conversation and choices you may have to make while on this mission.

Paragon/Renegade dialogue choices aren't covered in great detail (so as to avoid spoilers), but you will be told when and with whom they take place to better prepare you for the conversation.

In many cases this section will also tell you about big, game-altering decisions that you may need to make.

ITEM REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Scattered throughout every mission are weapons, useful items, weapon mods, and other things worth picking up. Whenever you encounter one of these items, you will see an Item Requisitions box pointing it out.

All of the items in a mission are listed here, in the Item Requisition Rundown. That way, you know exactly what types of items you will find during a particular mission.

AROUND THE GALAXY

As you progress through each mission of the single-player campaign, several other side missions, like N7 or Citadel missions, will become available.

These missions are not integral to the main campaign; you can complete them at your leisure or not at all.

To see when these missions become available (unlock) and become unavailable (lock), check the Around the Galaxy section. This section will also tell you which section you can go to to complete said missions.

NOTE

Missions lock and unlock differently. For example, a Citadel mission may become available at a certain point in the game, but you must still listen to the appropriate ambient conversation to obtain it.

Other missions, like N7 missions, automatically unlock and become available without you having to do anything. Meanwhile, nearly every mission will remain available once unlocked, up until "Priority: Horizon."

There are a few missions that become unavailable (lock) after certain conditions are met. Those lock conditions for those missions are explained in their respective Around the Galaxy sections.

WAR PREPARATIONS

Prior to every mission, you will also encounter a "War Preparations" section. Here you can read about what is going on between missions aboard the Normandy, the Citadel, and elsewhere.

This section will clue you in to possible romance conversations, important dialogue options, and even help you stay ahead of the game with suggestions on when to upgrade weaponry.

This section is for players who want to get more out of their single-player campaign but don't want exhaustive point-by-point instructions on what to say or do.

Players who wish to focus on the mission only can skip this entire section and go straight to the mission header following the "War Preparations" section.

REPUTATION

One of Mass Effect 3's most important systems is the Reputation system. As you complete missions, help others, or explore the galaxy, your reputation on the galactic stage will grow.

This will unlock new dialogue options in key conversations, giving you better solutions to some otherwise-difficult moments.

Reputation can be, but does not have to be, flavored as either Paragon or Renegade.

You can gain Paragon reputation for taking the gentle, sympathetic, and legal route through conversations and missions, while you gain Renegade reputation for taking the harsh, pragmatic, or violent route.

Many choices are morally gray and will give reputation that is neither Paragon nor Renegade.

In conversation, Renegade dialogue options are usually on the lower half of the conversation wheel, while Paragon dialogue options are on the upper half of the wheel.

You can also earn reputation by taking interrupts, seizing control of the conversation, and earning a name across the galaxy as someone who makes waves.

When you gain reputation, regardless of whether it is Paragon, Renegade, or unflavored, it increases your overall Reputation score to unlock new dialogue options.

MULTIPLE APPROACHES

As you progress through the mission walkthrough sections, you'll find that certain key battles have multiple approaches. Most have two approaches; some even have three.

This is to highlight the multitude of strategies that are possible throughout the game. Vanguard players may find that a specific strategy in tight spaces works far better than a sniper-proficient class.

Similarly, an Engineer may have a tougher time getting out of a particular battle than an Adept. We can't possibly provide every strategy for every battle encounter, so instead we provide you at least two different approaches as suggestions.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

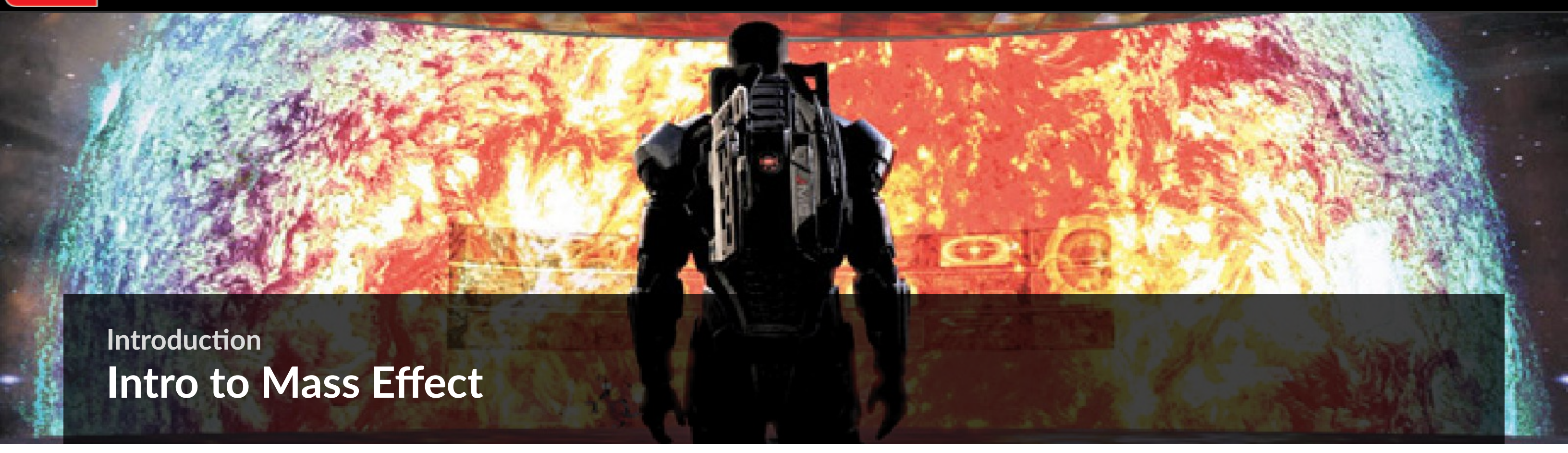
Mass Effect is a long-running series that spans several games, novels, graphic novels, and other mediums.

For players who have already experienced Mass Effect and are bringing their game saves into Mass Effect 3, we've included these "Previously in Mass Effect" sidebars.

Here you will learn about some of the many possibilities available for story variations.

For example, players who imported a game save from Mass Effect 2 where Jack is still alive, may be happy to see that she appears during a particular side mission.

If you didn't import the same save state, then you may miss out on the differences. In "Previously in Mass Effect" sidebars, we highlight those subtle variations for all players to enjoy.



Intro to Mass Effect

MASS EFFECT

In 2183, the galaxy faced a threat that was once considered a myth, supported only in the broken remnants of a civilization known as the Protheans.

It was said that the Reapers, a super-advanced extra-galactic race, were responsible for the cleansing of all organic life in the galaxy every 50,000 years.

The myth was soon proven to be real. The galactic cycle was coming to an end; the Reapers were coming.

Commander Shepard, a member of the human Systems Alliance, managed to defy the expectations of the galactic community.

He/she became the first human Spectre (who are agents of the galactic Citadel Council) and stopped the treacherous actions of Saren Arterius, a former Spectre.

Indoctrinated into subservience by the Reaper vessel called Sovereign, Saren believed that obedience could save organic life in the galaxy from the coming destruction. Only after a costly battle was the galaxy spared the immediate threat.

The Reapers were merely delayed, not stopped. Commander Shepard vowed to find a way to fend off the inevitable invasion.

MASS EFFECT 2

Despite overwhelming evidence to support the coming Reaper menace, the politicians of the Council believed Sovereign had been the creation of the geth, a race of synthetics. Shepard would pay for their ignorance, and so would his closest allies.

The Normandy, a frigate under the Spectre's command, would be attacked by a vessel belonging to the enigmatic Collectors.

Mere weeks after the triumph over Sovereign, Shepard was dead to the galaxy, and everything revealed about the Reapers was filed away as delusions and paranoia.

The Cerberus organization, led by the Illusive Man, was the only force in the galaxy that truly believed in what Shepard had revealed about the Reapers.

Recovering the Spectre's corpse, Cerberus spent two years and untold sums of money rebuilding the hero and the Normandy. The unlikely alliance had one goal: to seek out the agents of the Reapers, the Collectors.

While Shepard lay on an operating table, the Collectors began harvesting hundreds of thousands of human colonists for reasons unknown.

The Illusive Man wanted Shepard to pursue the Collectors to their headquarters in an unmapped sector of space, find out what they were doing to their victims, and put a stop to it permanently.

Even for such a skilled Spectre, the odds of survival were slim at best.

To accomplish this suicide mission, Shepard needed a new team. Gathering the most skilled, most ruthless, and most determined men and women in the galaxy, Shepard once again succeeded where others predicted failure. The Collectors were defeated.

The Reapers, patient as they always had been, regarded this as a mere inconvenience. They would find another way.

Cerberus had an ulterior motive to bringing back an agent who once interfered with their operations throughout the galaxy.

They wanted to use the technology discovered in the aftermath of the Collectors' defeat to prepare humanity for the Reapers and to place the human race above all others in the galaxy.

Shepard would eventually split from Cerberus and desperately fight to stall the invasion. This extreme action taken by the Spectre would eventually strip the Normandy from their command, awaiting court-martial at the hands of the Systems Alliance.

In 2186, the shadow of the Reapers finally cast itself across the galaxy, and the Earth would find itself facing the tip of the spear....

WHAT IS *MASS EFFECT 3* ?

The third game of the action role-playing game franchise that started in 2007, *Mass Effect 3* places players in the role of Commander Shepard, as he or she leads a squad trying to fend off the greatest threat to galactic civilization ever seen.

Using a wide variety of weapons and special powers, players must fight their way through a relentless enemy. Success on the battlefield yields experience points that go toward improving your team and earns you money that goes toward improving your equipment.

You won't win the war through violence alone. A staple of the franchise, some of the most important battles are won and lost based on your choices made in the branching dialogue system.

Also returning to the game is the morality system, which determines your overall alignment and what special dialogue options are available.

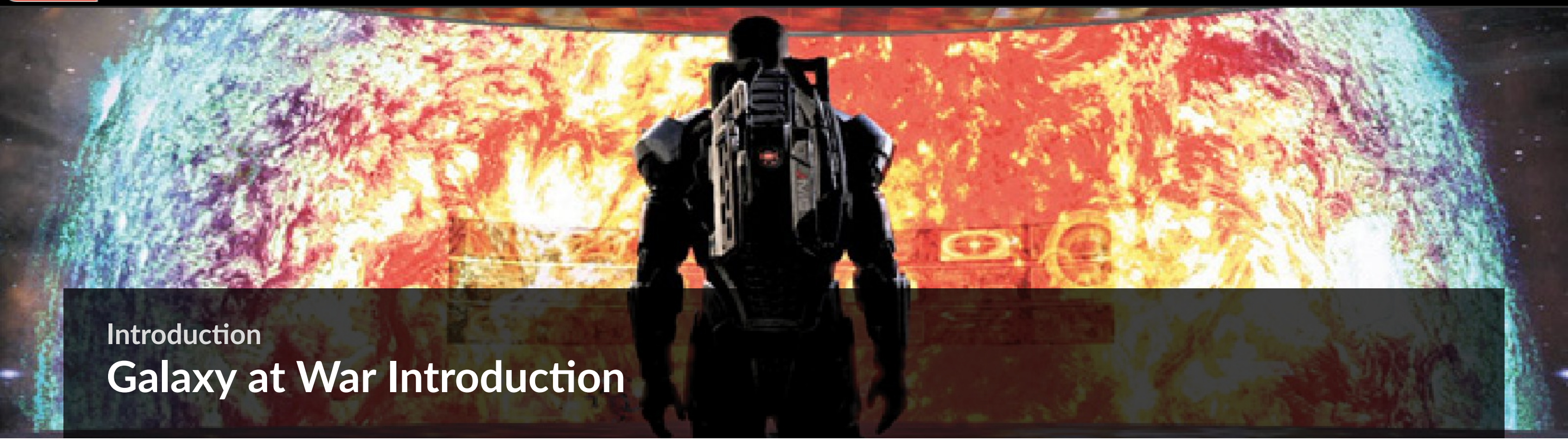
Your choice of words and actions will help form a coalition that, with luck, will be capable of striking back against the Reapers.

With the Reapers striking so hard across so many fronts, the war is much bigger than any one squad can turn the tides of—even a squad led by a living legend like Commander Shepard.

To that end, Shepard must gather War Assets from as many species and as many worlds as possible. Some War Assets are earned in combat. Others are earned through skillful diplomacy.

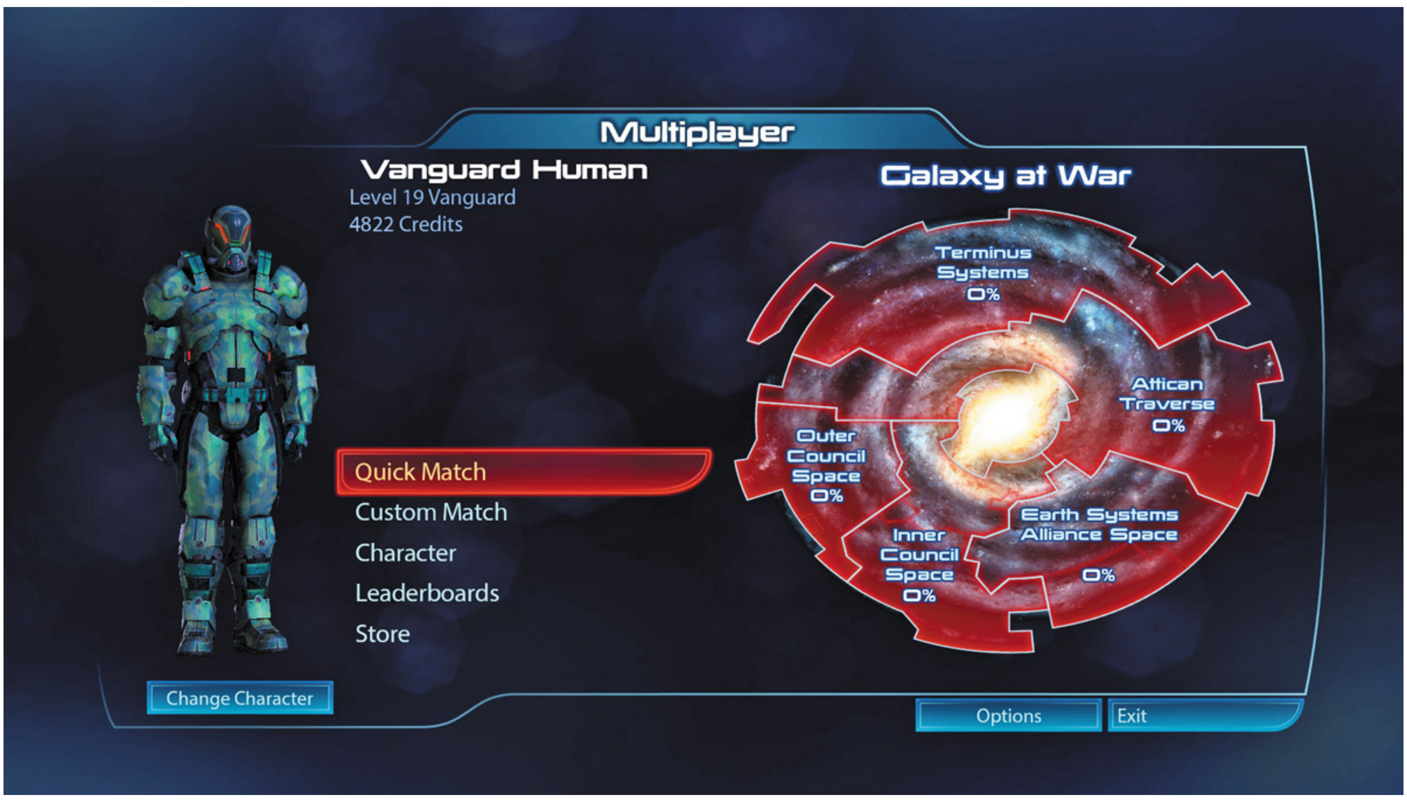
Returning players who import their endgame saves from previous *Mass Effect* games will find that the decisions they've made as Shepard will continue to affect the overall story and may have special advantages over those just now starting the series.

They retain perks from their previous gameplay and have access to War Assets that are unique to imported characters. However, even newer players are capable of reaching for the best possible ending, thanks to a new feature introduced to *Mass Effect 3* : the Galaxy at War.



Introduction

Galaxy at War Introduction



The Galaxy at War cooperative multiplayer, a franchise first, is not just for fun: Your successes and failures also directly influence the galactic Readiness Rating across the five sectors of the Milky Way.

The total readiness of the galaxy indicates how well the War Assets fighting in those regions are weathering the Reaper advance. The overall percentage also determines how much each asset can contribute to the war effort.

It also determines how prepared your War Assets are to move at a moment's notice and is a critical factor in defeating the Reapers.

A basic example would go something like this: An Alliance marine unit is worth 100 points. However, your Readiness Rating is at only 50 percent, so the Effective Military Strength asset can contribute to the final push is 50 points.

Now take that Readiness Rating and apply it to every War Asset you collect throughout the single-player campaign. Suddenly that 2,000 point armada is much less effective.

Cooperative multiplayer is the primary way to increase your Readiness Rating in *Mass Effect 3* .

Working with other players around the world, you create a team of elite soldiers and fight to maintain a hold of objectives that Commander Shepard helped liberate from enemy hands in the single-player story.

Each battle, won or lost, raises overall galactic readiness, with victories contributing more to readiness than losses.

In this way, even players who do not have access to War Assets that are available only to imported Shepards can boost the power of their fleets to be capable of standing up to the Reapers.

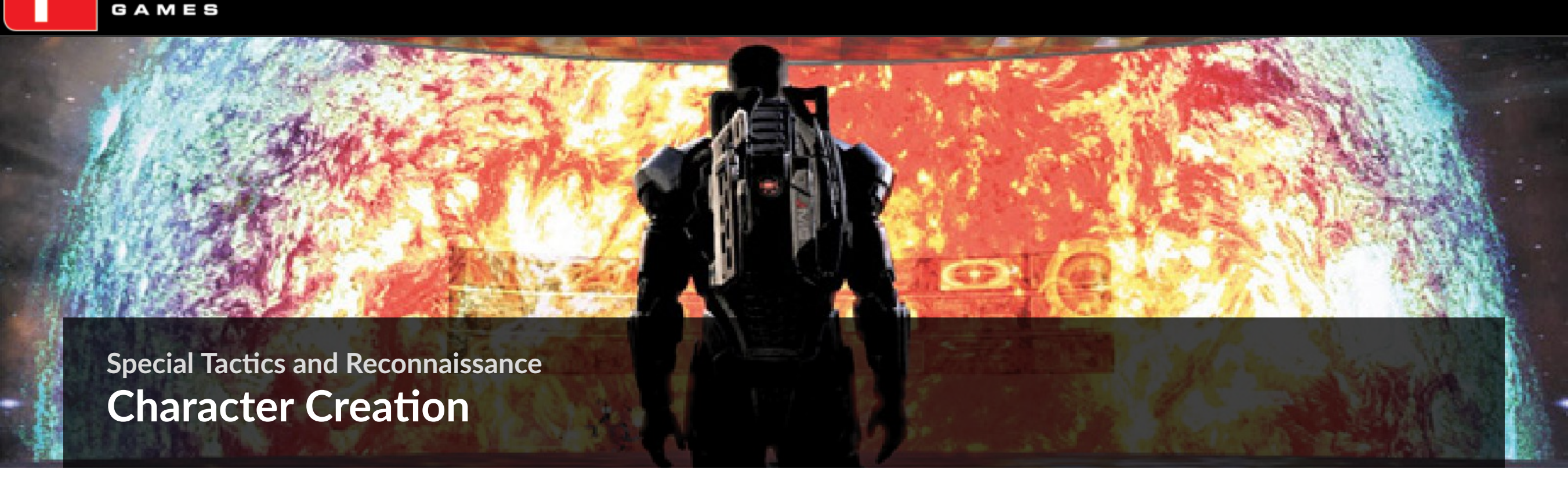
The percentage of Readiness Rating gained for each multiplayer session changes based on several factors:

- If the player plays a random multiplayer map (the random option must be selected), they earn a 3 percent bonus to overall galactic readiness.
- If the player plays a specific map, the sector the map takes place in gains a 7 percent bonus, with overall readiness going up by 1 percent.
- Failing to complete a map offers a lower Readiness Rating increase compared to a successful mission.

The Readiness Rating does not stay maxed out forever. It is in a state of constant decay. A week of inactivity can reduce readiness by nearly 7 percent, but it will never fall below 50 percent.

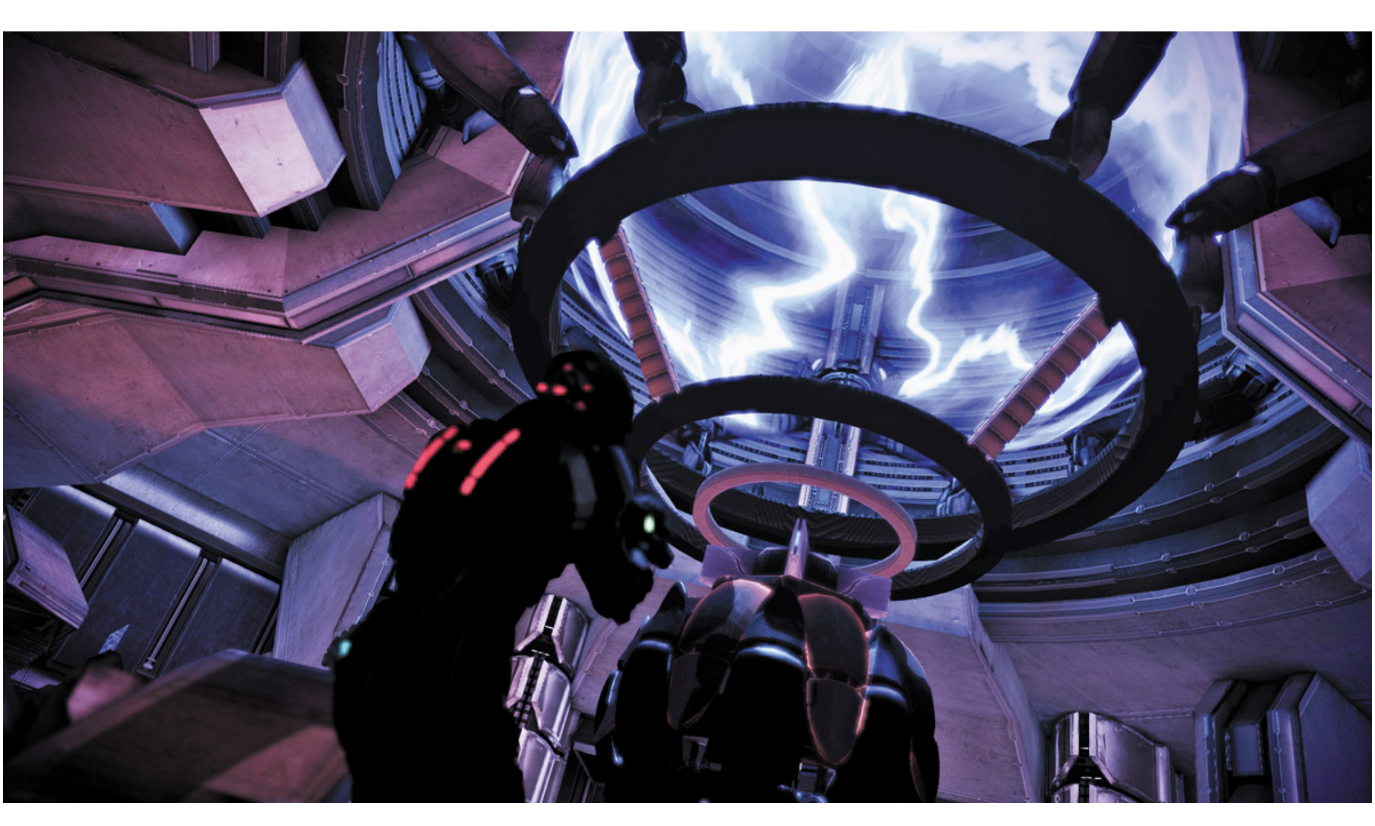
In order to maintain it, players are encouraged to put some time into multiplayer. However, this is optional!

It is still possible to reach the end game, but the available endings are tied to both the Effective Military Strength of the forces you gather for the fight and how high your Readiness Rating is. Certain ending sequences are directly affected by these factors as well.

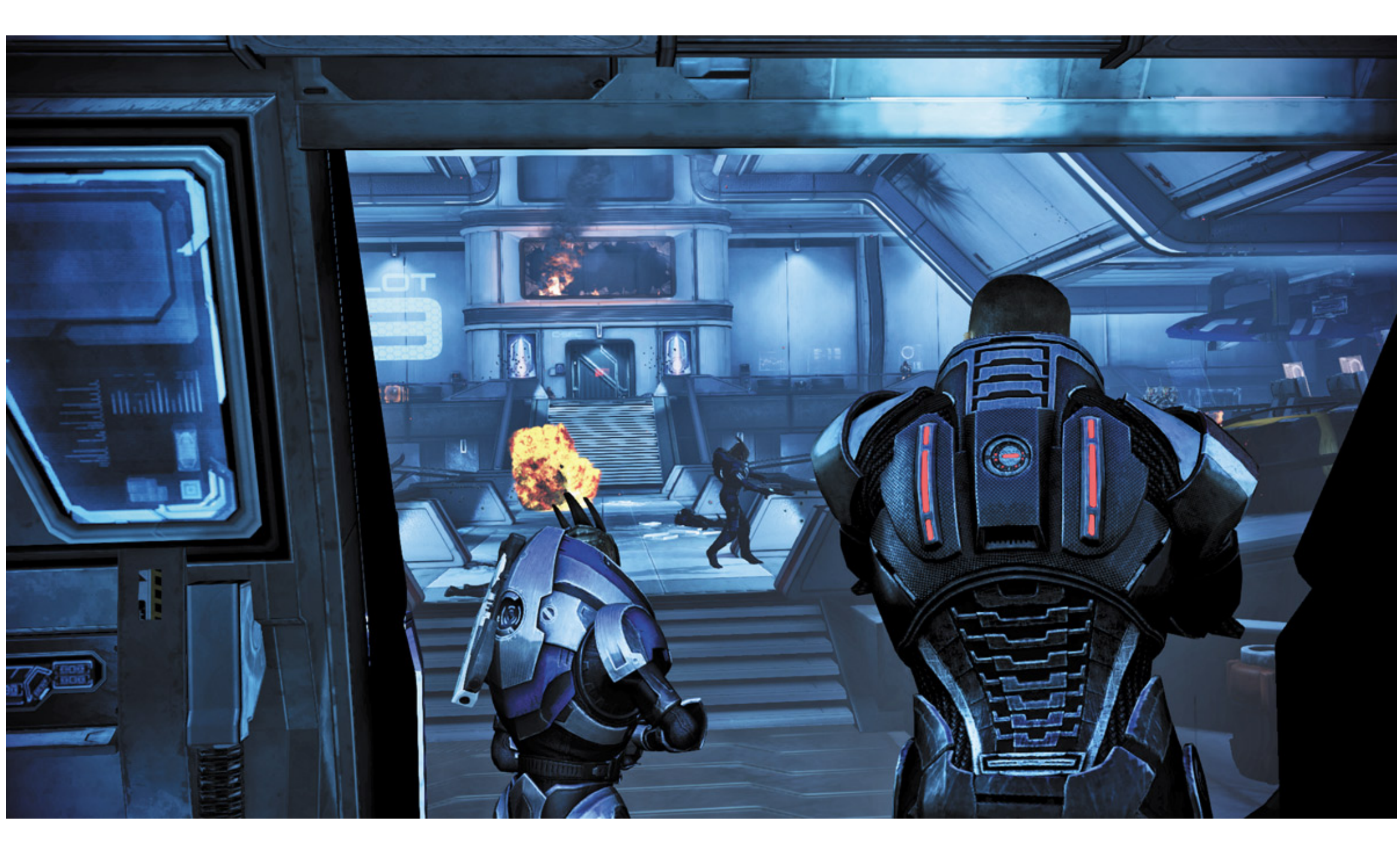


Special Tactics and Reconnaissance

Character Creation



Mass Effect 3 is a story involving billions of creatures throughout the galaxy as the Reapers begin their death march through all civilization, but it centers around one special individual: Commander Shepard, a member of the human Alliance Navy and the first human to join the elite Citadel Spectres.



Spectres are the hidden blade of the Citadel Council and are given full authority to resolve situations in the way they see necessary in order to preserve the galactic status quo. They are above traditional authority and are held to different standards than any soldier from any other species. They are valued for their skills as negotiators as they are for their skills at assassination. In Mass Effect 3, the decisions Shepard will make using Spectre authority can influence the fates of the whole species.

Longtime fans will have had two previous games to make the character their own. New players will have to create a Shepard from scratch and craft him or her into their vision of a formidable galactic savior/ They will need to develop their social and martial skills, being mindful of the cnosequences of their decisions. They will need to be armed and armored with the best that credits can afford. They will need to be the best war fighters possible and use every skill at their disposal to their advantage. The enemy faced is nothing short of the vanguard of oblivion for all sapient species'.

New and returning players alike have the opportunity at the start of *Mass Effect 3* to create or re-create the appearance of Commander Shepard.

Players new to the series will also be able to select from several key background elements that will help shape Shepard's story during the course of the game.

GAME MODES

One of the new additions to *Mass Effect 3* is the ability for players to choose between three different gameplay modes based on their personal preferences. You cannot change this once the game has begun, so consider carefully how you want to experience the game!

NOTE

Not one of these modes is considered canon! What is canon to some players may not be to others. Your decisions are your own, so do not feel pressured to select a certain mode over others or make decisions that you do not agree with!

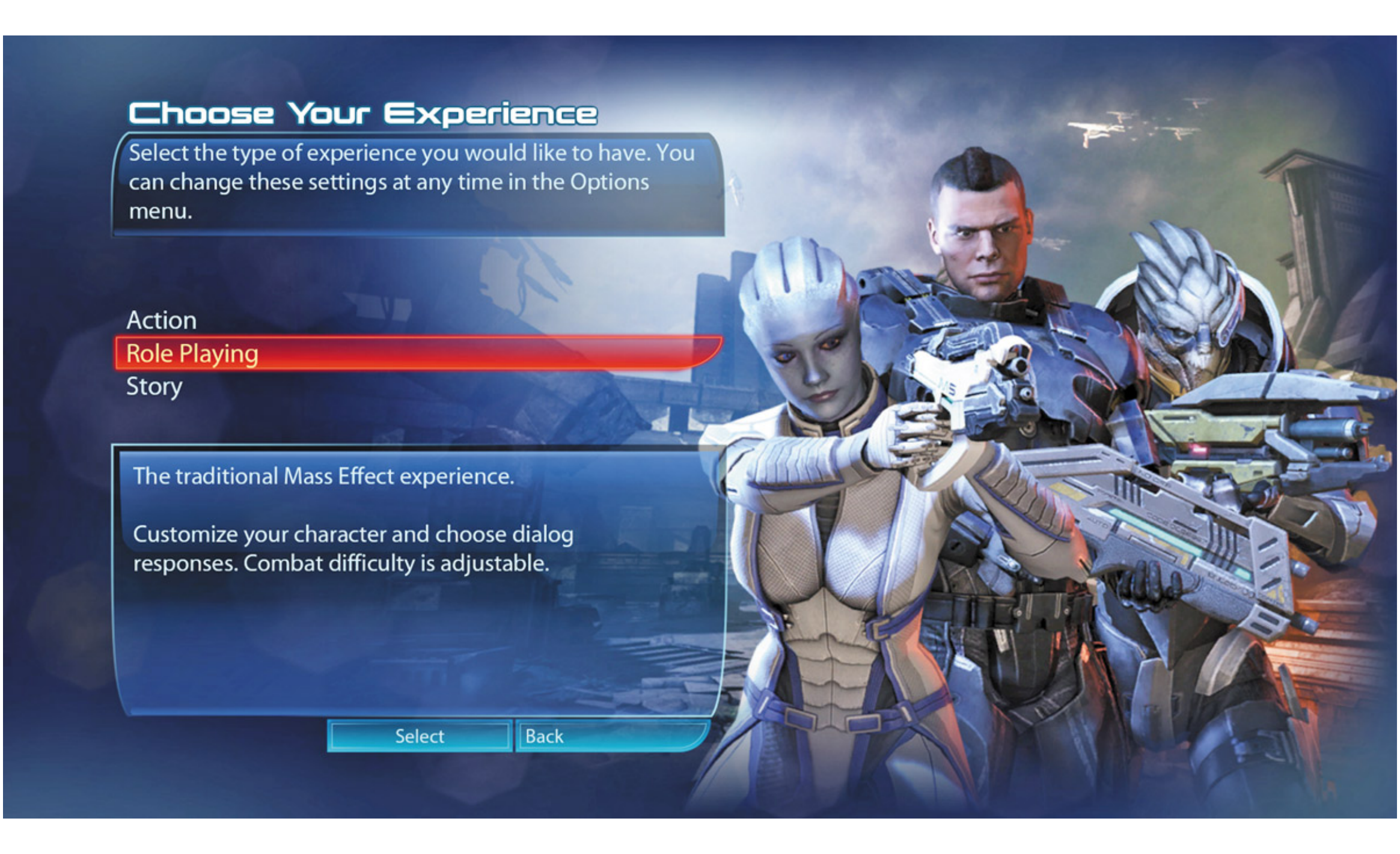
Action Mode

Action mode emphasizes the combat of *Mass Effect 3* , and all major decisions and conversations have a mixture of Paragon or Renegade responses. This allows players to concentrate entirely on preparing for and engaging in combat.

Story Mode

A setting designed for players who are less comfortable or skilled with action games, Story mode makes combat much easier to complete, while allowing players to experience the traditional dialogue system the *Mass Effect* franchise is known for.

You can still die in battle if you're careless, but putting some effort into it will allow you to succeed far more often than not.



Choose Your Experience

Select the type of experience you would like to have. You can change these settings at any time in the Options menu.

The traditional Mass Effect experience.

Customize your character and choose dialog responses. Combat difficulty is adjustable.

Role-Playing Mode

This is the traditional form of *Mass Effect* that fans are familiar with. In Role-Playing mode, players will face challenging combat and experience all the dialogue options and character interactions throughout the whole game.

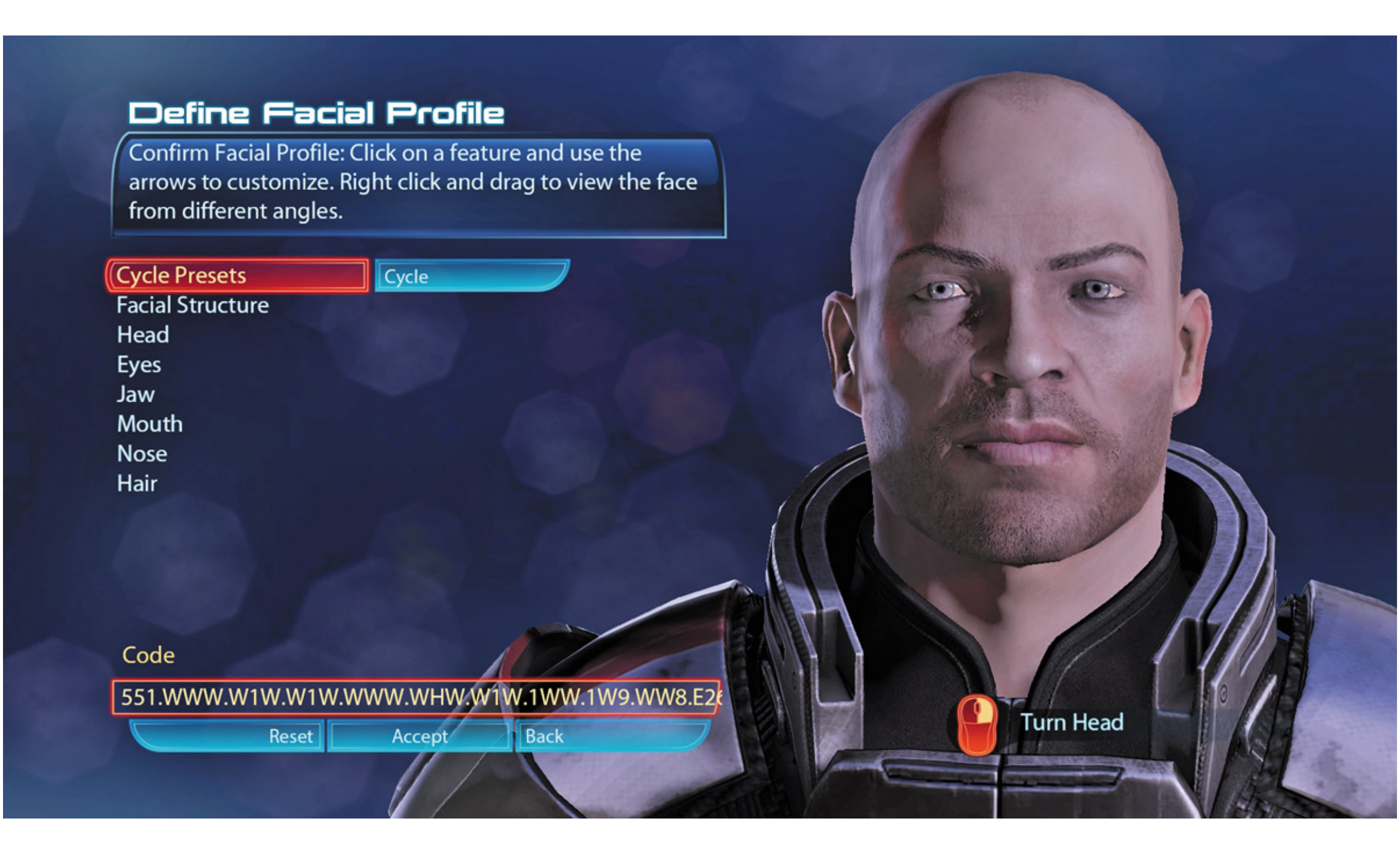
This mode is exactly what returning fans have come to expect, and new players looking to experience the entirety of *Mass Effect 3* are encouraged to select this mode.

TIP

Overall combat difficulty can be chosen in the Options menu, which can change things such as the resilience and lethality of enemies and their level of aggression.

If you want a challenge, flip on Insanity and try not to break any controllers or keyboards.

APPEARANCE



Define Facial Profile

Confirm Facial Profile: Click on a feature and use the arrows to customize. Right click and drag to view the face from different angles.

Code

551.WWW.W1W.W1W.WWW.WHW.W1W.1WW.1W9.WW8.E2

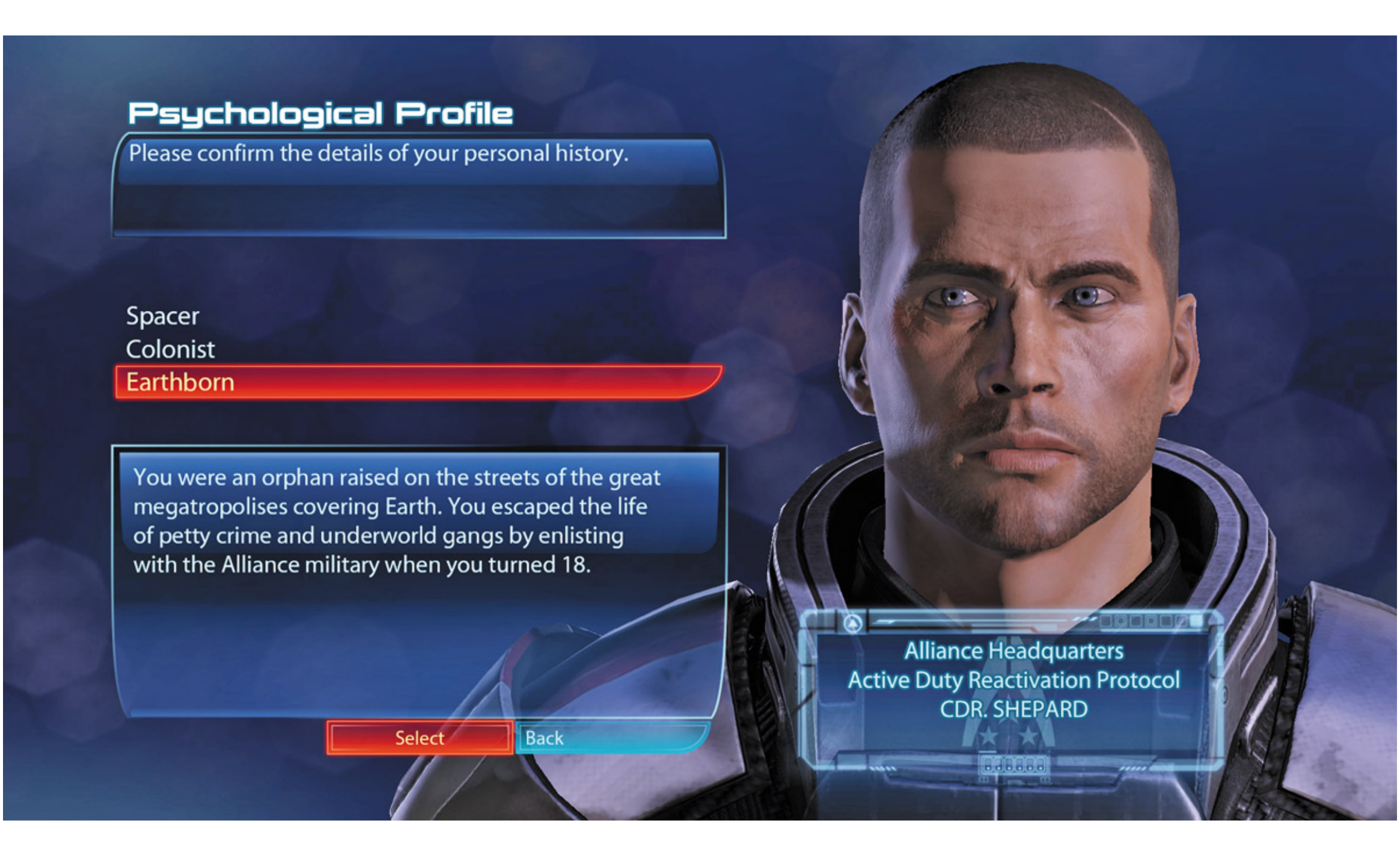
Your facial appearance is based entirely on your personal preferences and does not affect the story or combat.

You can select from several preset faces and can edit them with the various tools, or you can stick with an imported face from a *Mass Effect 2* endgame save.

A passcode appears on the Facial Customization screen that changes with every alteration you make, allowing you to share your Shepard with others.

Facial alterations are divided into several categories, and within each there are multiple options from which to choose, from nose size, eye color, jawline, hair, makeup for the ladies, even the size of Shepard's mouth.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND DATA



Psychological Profile

Please confirm the details of your personal history.

You were an orphan raised on the streets of the great megatropolises covering Earth. You escaped the life of petty crime and underworld gangs by enlisting with the Alliance military when you turned 18.

New Shepards can select from a series of backgrounds and psychological profiles that help determine their initial overall Reputation and their Paragon and Renegade scores.

This also helps determine which characters new players will meet in *Mass Effect 3* . New to the series is a set of options to determine the combat losses Shepard's allies have sustained during previous adventures.

Imported Shepards cannot change their background, psychological profile, or combat losses. These are determined by choices made in the previous games.

Backgrounds

- **Spacer:** Both of your parents were Alliance military officers, and as a child, you spent most of your time on ships or stations, rarely staying in one spot for long as the family was transferred from post to post. At the age of 18, you followed the family footsteps into military service.
- **Colonist:** You were born on the colony world Mindoir, located in the Attican Traverse. When you were 16, slavers raided the colony, slaughtering family and friends alike. A passing Alliance patrol managed to save you, and a few years later, you joined the Alliance military.
- **Earthborn:** Born in one of the massive cities that have spread across the Earth, you were raised on the streets. At 18, you escaped your life of petty crime and gangland violence, enlisting in the Alliance military.

Psychological Profiles

- **Sole Survivor:** During your Alliance service, a mission went horribly wrong. Cut off from any support, you were forced to overcome intense physical and psychological hardships as your squad was whittled down to you alone. You remained strong under pressures that would have broken lesser soldiers.
- **War Hero:** In your early days of military service, the colony planet Elysium, located at the Skyllian Verge, was attacked by pirates and mercenaries in what would be called the Skyllian Blitz. You single-handedly rallied resistance efforts at key positions until Alliance reinforcements arrived. Your actions on that day have made you a hero.
- **Ruthless:** Your military career has been defined by your willingness to get the job done at any cost. You have sent men and women to their deaths to accomplish goals and have mercilessly executed captured enemy soldiers in order to make a point. You get things done and are feared and respected for it.

Combat Losses

- **Kaiden Alenko:** A male human Biotic who served under Shepard during *Mass Effect 1* . During a mission to the planet Virmire, a pivotal decision needed to be made between saving him or another squadmate. Kaiden was left behind in order to save the rest of the team.
- **Ashley Williams:** A female human soldier who served under Shepard during ME1, she was the other teammate who could be rescued from Virmire, but only at the cost of the other.
- **Numerous Losses:** The large numbers of friends and allies who have died around Shepard have started to take a serious psychological toll on him/her.

This also means that a large portion of the cast who would typically play a role in the events of *Mass Effect 3* , are dead or you never met them in the first place. In the case of the surviving crew member from the first *Mass Effect* , it will always be the one of opposite sex to Shepard.

TIP

It is recommended to new players to choose either Kaiden or Ashley for combat losses. With the Numerous Losses option, you lose out on some very entertaining characters that people new to the series ought to experience.

It also never hurts to have more options for selectable squadmates for combat missions.

CLASSES

Once you've determined your appearance and psychological profile, you are now given the choice of six different classes to make Shepard. Even importing players get a choice of what class to play as. Available classes are:

- Soldier
- Infiltrator
- Vanguard
- Sentinel
- Adept
- Engineer

Each of these classes has its own power sets and preferred battlefield roles. For more information on these classes, see "The Squad" chapter.

NOTE

See *The Squad* section for more information about classes.

CHARACTER IMPORTATION

Veteran players of *Mass Effect 1* and 2 can bring their Shepards into *Mass Effect 3* , carrying the weight of all the decisions made in those previous games. Major plot events, that brand-new Shepards have difficulties finding solutions for, may have additional new characters or options available to imported Shepards.

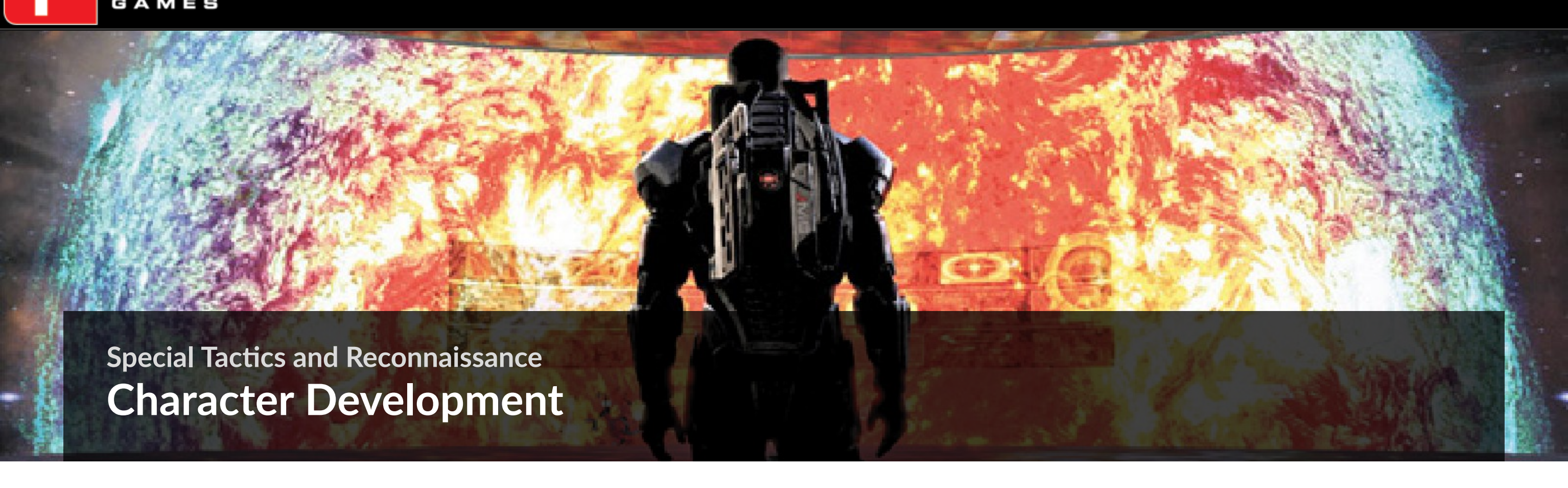
Imported *ME2* Shepards receive the following bonuses:

- Character's level
- Talent points
- All of their powers (excluding any bonus powers)
- A 15 percent bonus to their Paragon or Renegade ratings

For players who finish *Mass Effect 3* and wish to play through it again, the game allows you to import your endgame Shepard into a new game file, retaining the following:

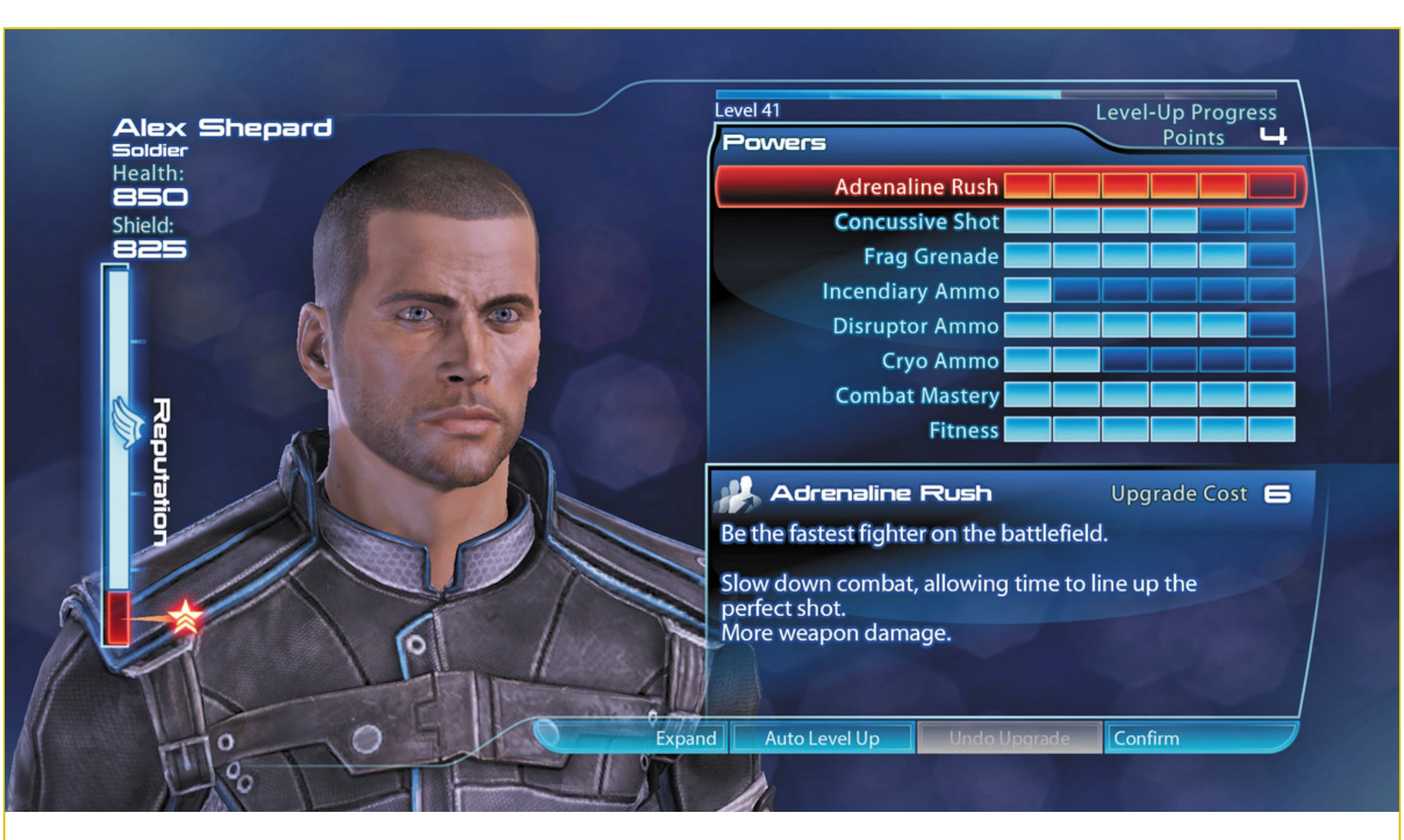
- The character's level, experience, talent points, and powers (including the bonus power)
- Credits
- Current Renegade/Paragon rating
- All weapons, mods, and armor

As an added bonus, Shepards who have completed one playthrough of *Mass Effect 3* are able to upgrade their guns even further than before. The first playthrough restricts weapon upgrades at Level 5; repeat playthroughs allow for upgrades up to Level 10!



Special Tactics and Reconnaissance

Character Development



Be the fastest fighter on the battlefield.

Slow down combat, allowing time to line up the perfect shot.
More weapon damage.

Character development in *Mass Effect 3* isn't just about what level you've reached, what powers you've chosen to improve, or what guns you carry.

It also involves the Paragon or Renegade decisions you've made through conversations you've had with other characters throughout the story.

Shepard's Reputation also factors in, opening up new options that possibly would not be available otherwise. Ultimately, some things can't be resolved with firepower alone.

It is important to manage the various aspects of Shepard in such a way that you're able to get the outcomes you desire, on and off the battlefield.

PARAGON OR RENEGADE?

During the course of *Mass Effect 3* , you'll often be asked to make some tough decisions as a means to an end or decide on a appropriate dialogue response based on your own feelings.

It can be as simple as being nice to a potential romantic interest or planting a fist firmly in the face of a crew member when they least expect it or deciding the fate of a planet that is under Reaper assault. It is important to stress that there is not a single "right" decision.

You can be the most ruthless and renegade Commander Shepard around, or you can be kind and helpful, or you can be a little of both and still reach the end of the game based on the decisions you've made.

Paragon

This side of the spectrum is the more diplomatic of the two alignments. Potential love interests typically respond better to Paragon answers during conversations.

These are usually on the upper half of the conversation wheel.

The Paragon path usually has the least amount of bloodshed, but this can sometimes play against you.

A fully Paragon Shepard may not be able to acquire certain War Assets because of his leanings, or a potentially dangerous threat could be set loose simply because you weren't willing to finish the job.

Renegade

While not necessarily evil, Renegade choices are often seen in a negative light.

Renegade is not about playing it safe or nice. Renegades will just as soon shoot an unarmed man as they would an armed one; they would shoot a friend in the back if it meant the ultimate mission was a success.

They will bribe, cajole, and kill, and do it with their ultimate goal in mind at all times.

Certain War Assets can only be acquired through this path, and certain quests can be made easier to accomplish, if you feel the ends justify the means.

Just remember that ruthlessness can alienate certain allies, and a bully may find himself without friends.

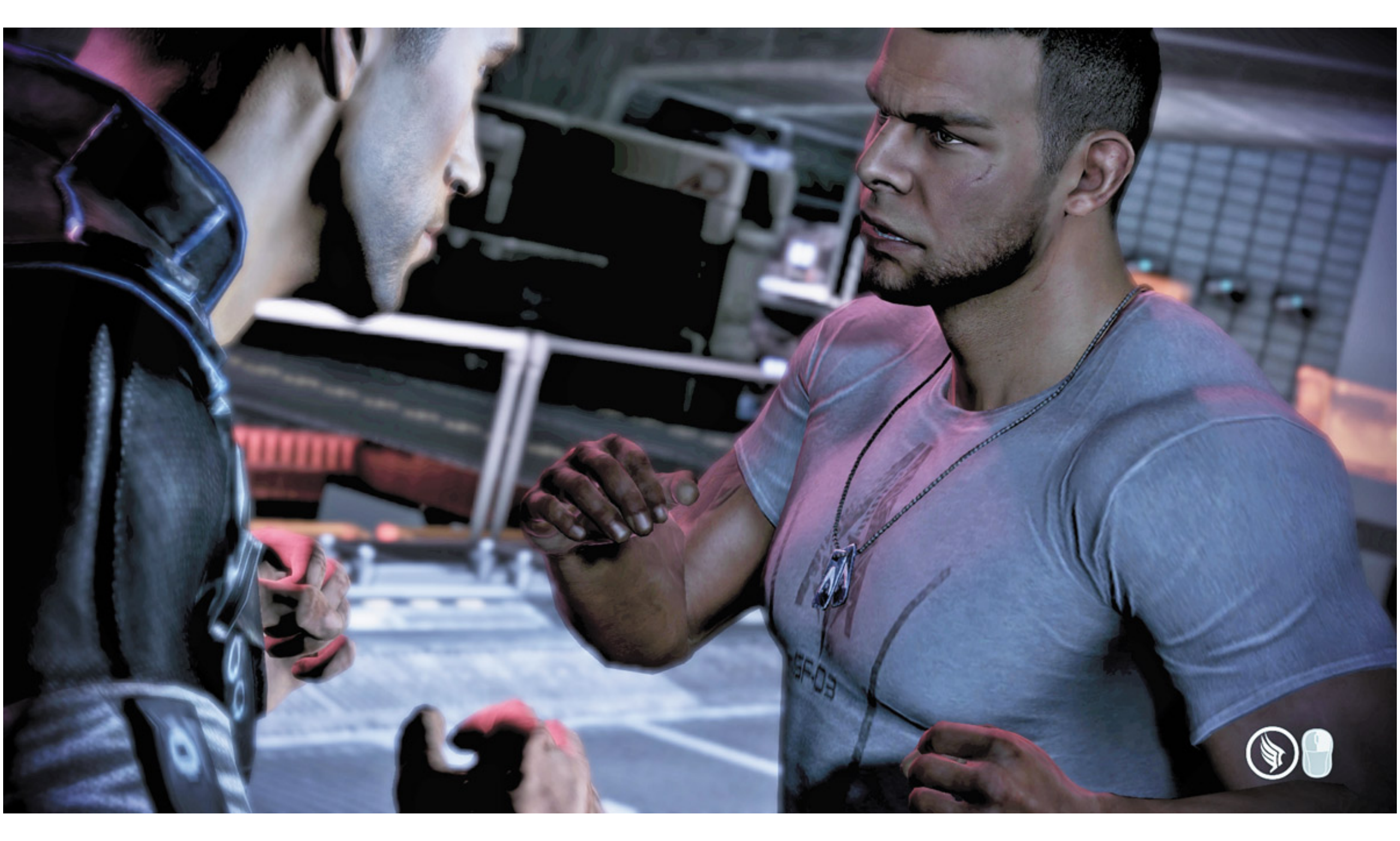
NOTE

Certain conversation options require very high Paragon or Renegade levels, something that may be difficult for new Shepards to achieve in a single playthrough.

Fortunately, multiple playthroughs allow players to carry over special bonuses to these ratings, allowing new conversational options to be opened up.

Being consistent with your responses also helps boost those levels faster.

INTERRUPTS



Returning from *Mass Effect 2* , Interrupts are timing-based events that can occur midconversation. An icon will appear onscreen, telling players to hit a certain trigger or button before the icon vanishes.

These are color-coded red for Renegade and blue for Paragon. Interrupts are worth additional points toward either alignment, sometimes by a significant amount, so keep your eyes open for Interrupt indicators.

Pay attention to the color! Just because an Interrupt is available does not necessarily mean you want to trigger it!

For instance, if a virus was being uploaded to a defense network, and your dying ally tells you to stop the upload, you may not want to trigger the Interrupt that will save his life if you don't feel comfortable with sacrificing millions of lives for one soldier.

Interrupts like this can change the tone of a conversation and sometimes may sour relations with important individuals or even lead to violence and deaths!

REPUTATION

A new mechanic introduced to *Mass Effect's* morality system, Reputation points are gained by engaging in conversation with squadmates, intervening in conversations and debates between two NPCs, and by making tough Renegade or Paragon decisions.

Reputation is another variable that factors in to whether you can successfully persuade others to see your point of view or diffuse a highly volatile situation.

Reputation isn't just something that supplements your Paragon or Renegade scores. Some of the most important turning points in the game require high levels of Reputation.

NOTE

Only Shepard needs to worry about Paragon, Renegade, and Reputation levels. No other character has these values being tracked.

AMBIENT CONVERSATION

As you walk through the Citadel and the Normandy, you will sometimes hear exchanges between two characters, with icons indicating Shepard can support one side of the conversation or the other.

Selecting one boosts your Reputation and can lead to new or improved War Assets that will determine the success of the Citadel races against the Reapers.

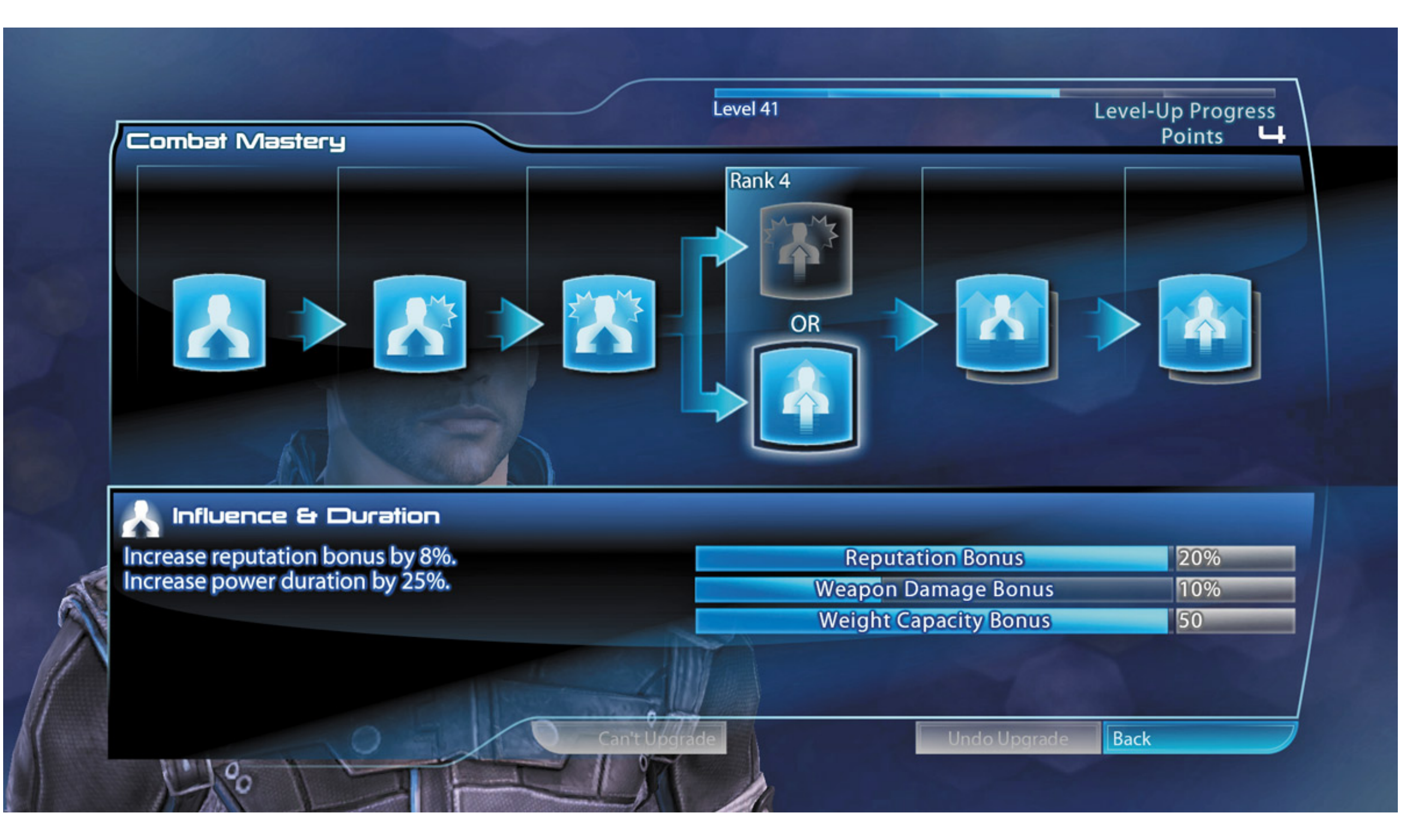
Some conversations you can't actively participate in, but instead they prompt Shepard to locate a specific item somewhere in the galaxy or in the middle of a larger mission.

For example, you overhear an asari scientist lamenting her inability to get her hands on some Biotic amps that would boost her people's performance in combat, thereby giving you a better War Asset.

She might even say where the amps can be located, and as it turns out, it's where you were headed next on an assignment.

You'll get a notification that this is an objective that can be accomplished in your Codex. If you find the amps she's looking for during your mission, you can return to her to complete the side quest.

YOUR POWERS



Increase reputation bonus by 8%.
Increase power duration by 25%.

Reputation Bonus 20%
Weapon Damage Bonus 10%
Weight Capacity Bonus 50

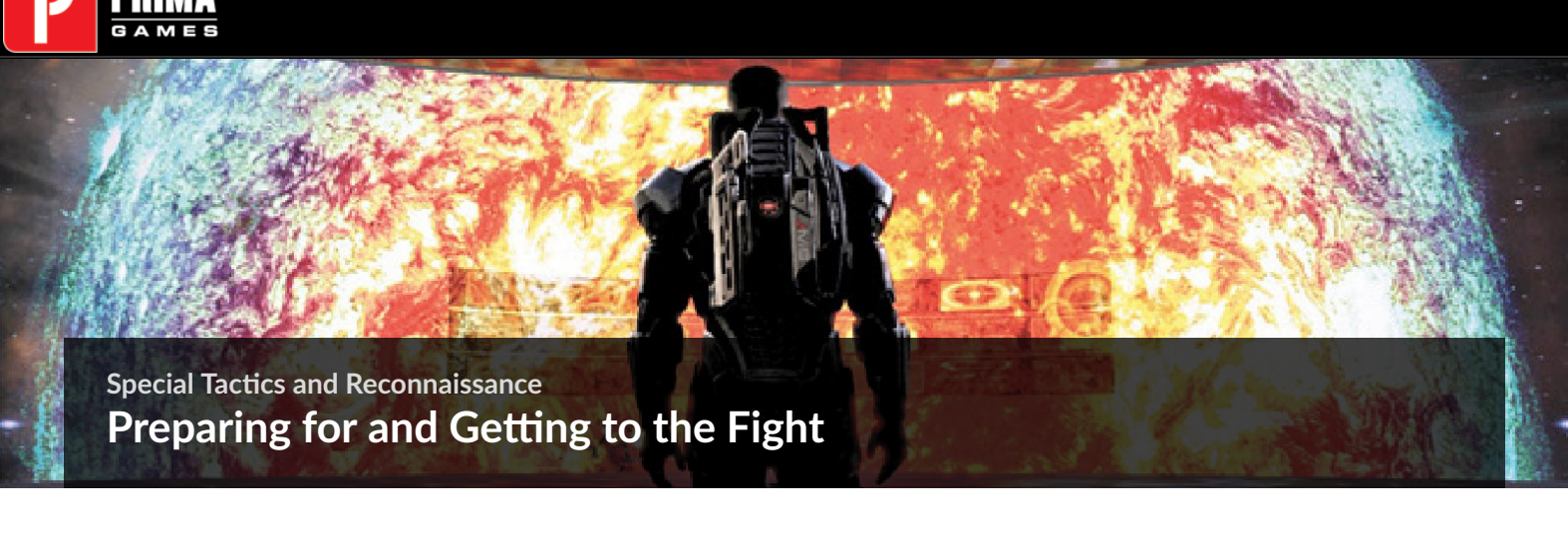
The other part of character development in *Mass Effect 3* comes from the more traditional method of earning experience points, gaining levels, and distributing the points earned with every level into the powers you prefer the most.

Shepard and his/her squadmates all gain experience at the same rates, even if not deployed in actual combat. Leveling your powers requires more points the higher you go in their respective trees, but the benefits are worth it.

In addition to the active combat powers, every class includes a set of passive skills that boost damage from weapons, Biotics, Tech powers, and melee strikes.

They also include stacking Reputation and alignment bonuses, which can help boost those levels to where they need to be to grant access to certain dialogue options.

For complete listings of all the powers across each class, check out "The Squad chapter." (see *The Squad* section).



Special Tactics and Reconnaissance

Preparing for and Getting to the Fight

The Reapers open new fronts across the entire galaxy over the course of *Mass Effect 3* , but they aren't the only threats that you must deal with.

Cerberus forces, under the command of the Illusive Man, have staked their own claims, actively attempting to sabotage the already failing unity of the Citadel races.

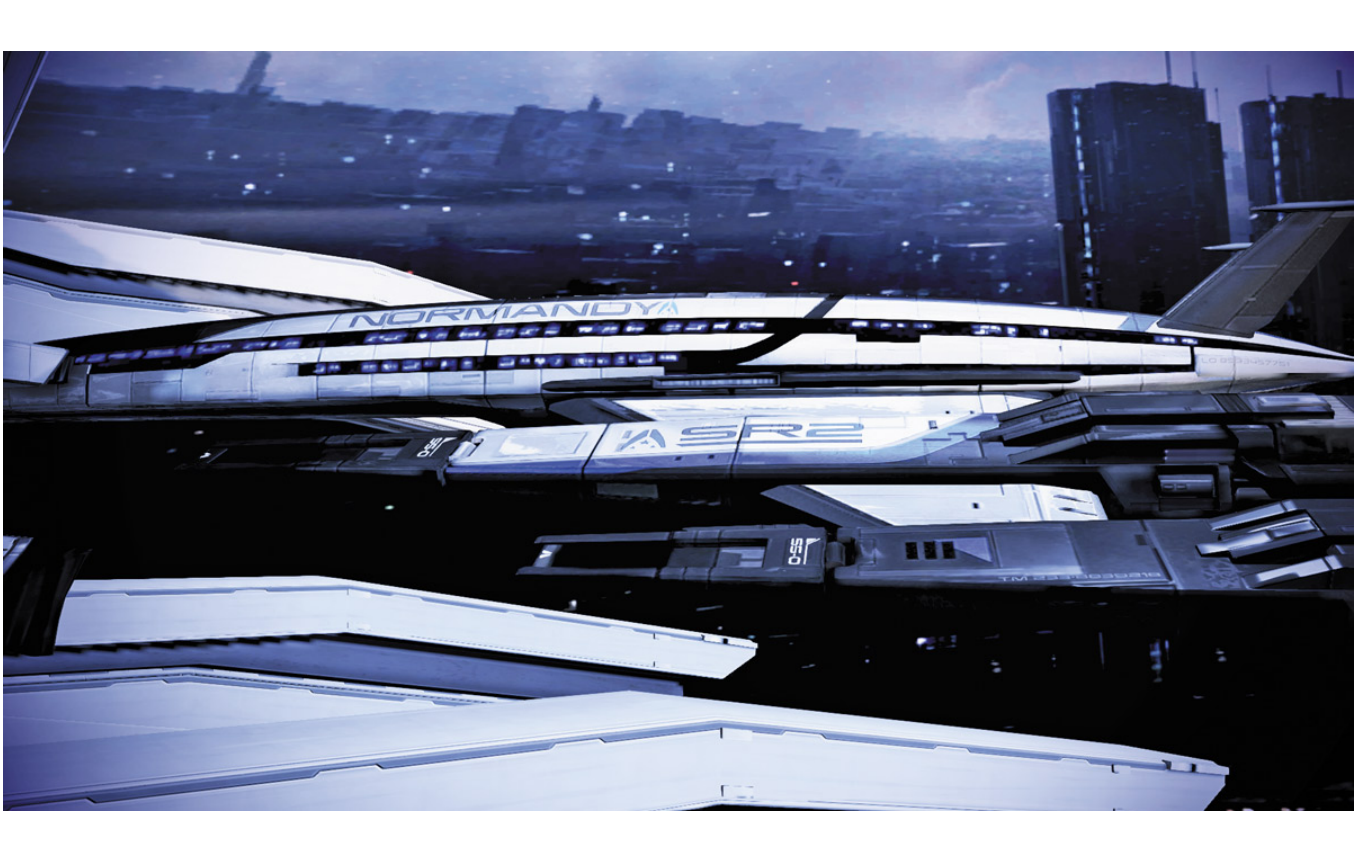
The geth are resurgent with the coming Reaper onslaught. There's a whole lot of galaxy to save, but Shepard is one Spectre, in command of one squad, on a lone ship.

Being well equipped counts for as much as being an excellent shot or a powerful Biotic, but you need more.

There are two central locations that you will revisit on a regular basis between combat zones: the Normandy and the Citadel (see *Citidal Maps* for labeled maps).

Here you will find the extra edge needed to give the whole galaxy a fighting chance.

THE NORMANDY



The iconic vessel that has seen service across the *Mass Effect* franchise, the Normandy SR2, is your mobile command center. It once flew Cerberus's colors.

Now it is firmly back in control of the Alliance military and has seen some improvements befitting a more militaristic mind-set.

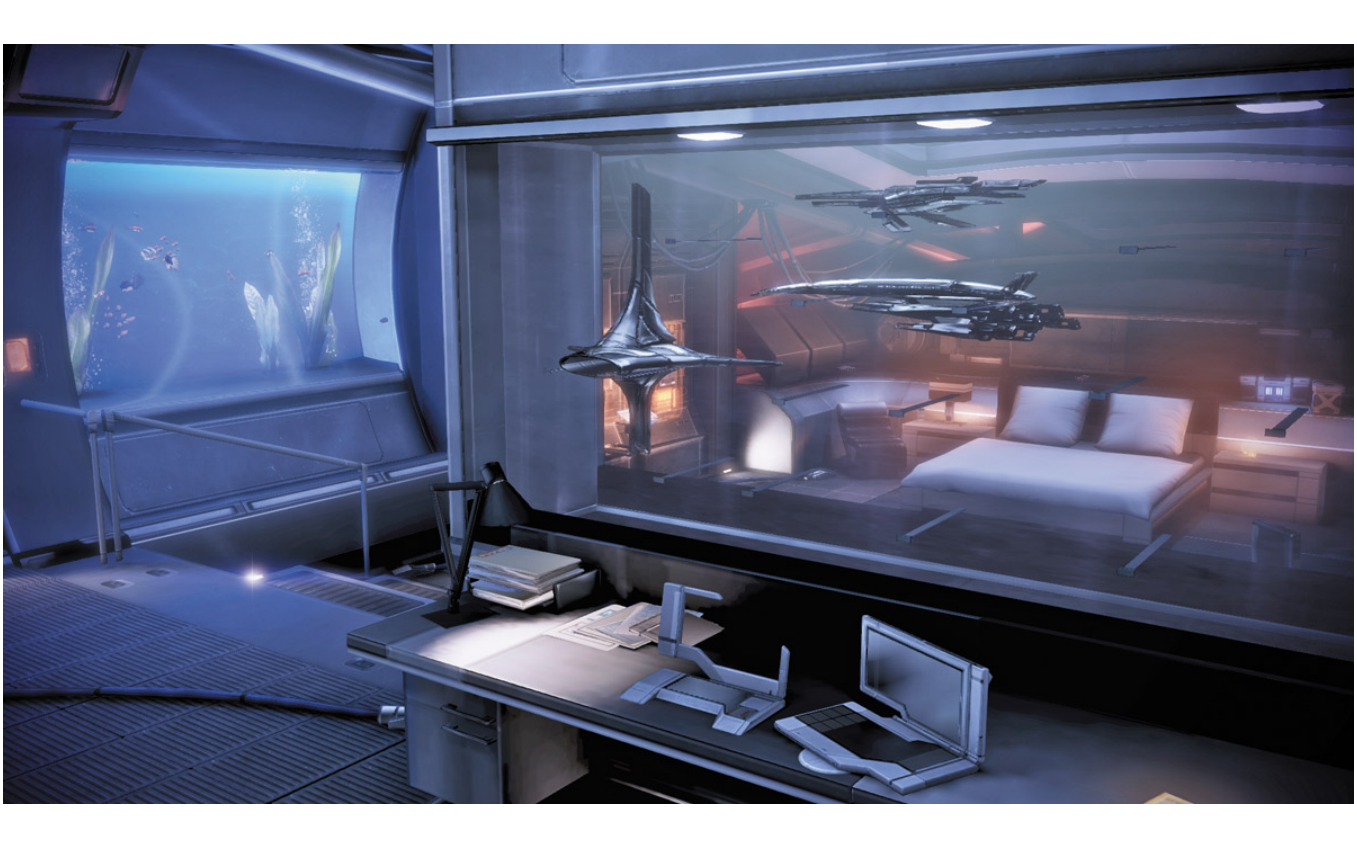
The Normandy is a warship, and it does its job of supporting Shepard and allies before and after every battle.

The Normandy retains its four decks, as seen in *Mass Effect 2* , with physical modifications and the addition of a fifth deck, the shuttle bay.

In addition to providing a place to gird for battle, the ship is also a place to chat up your crew. Be sure to do this between every major assignment, as new conversations may be available.

Potential romances can be pursued among the crew, and Alignment and Reputation can also be influenced here as well.

The Captain's Cabin



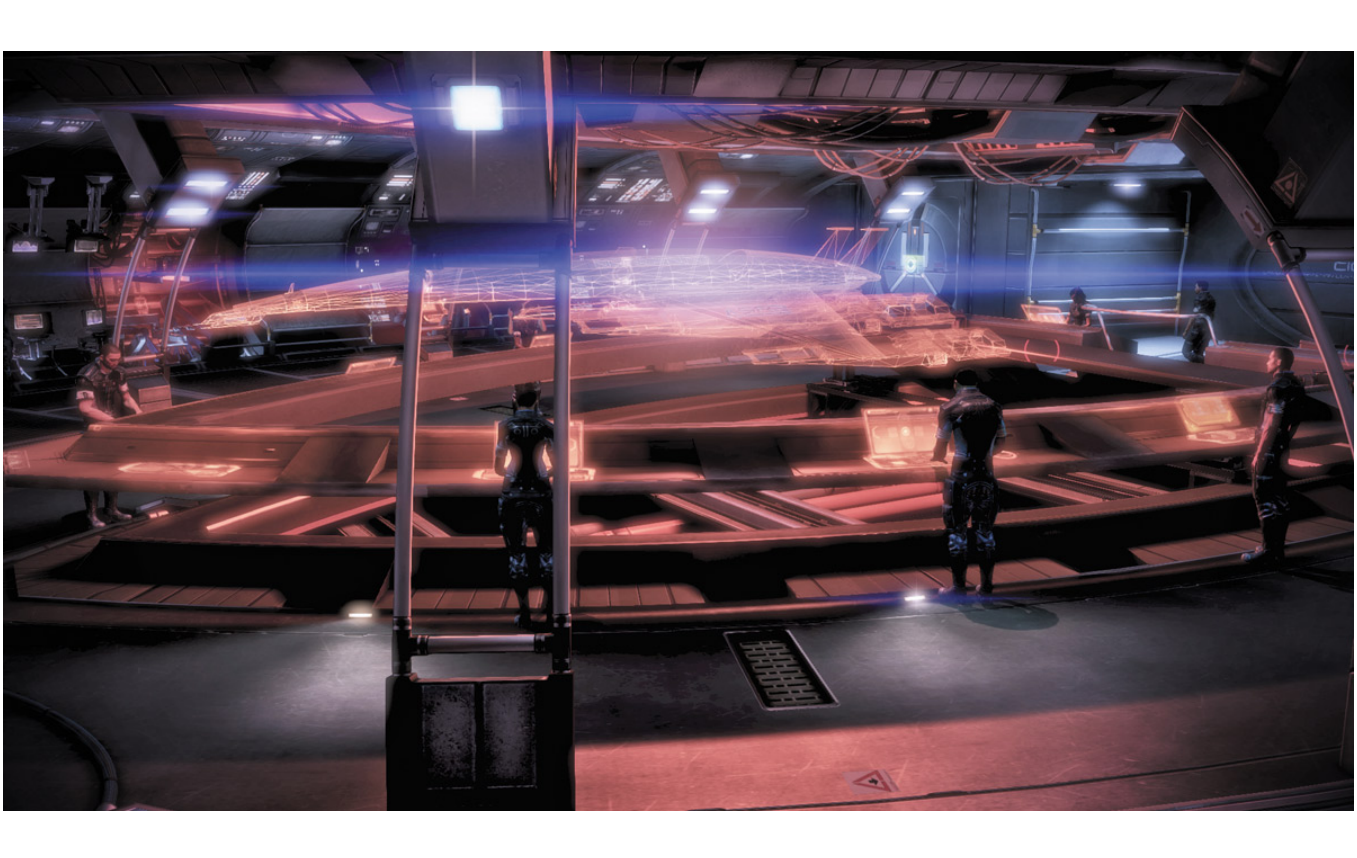
Also called "the Loft" by Cerberus dockworkers during the SR2's construction, the captain's cabin is a place for Commander Shepard to relax between missions, potentially with a romantic interest.

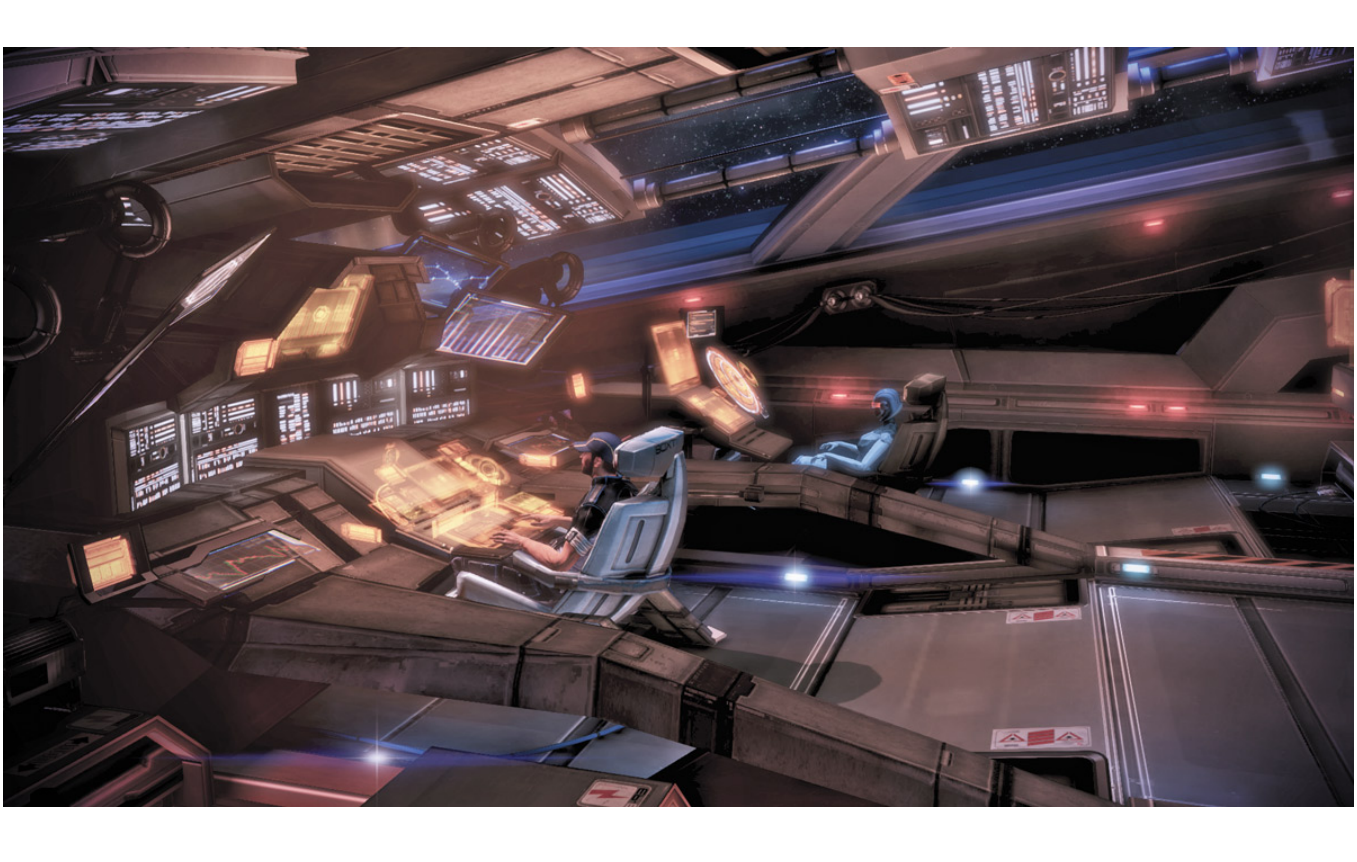
Occasionally, crew members will request a meeting in private with Shepard, and they can be called up to the cabin via the private terminal.

An aquarium is available for Shepard if you purchase pet fish from the markets on the Citadel or via the Requisitions terminal in the shuttle bay.

A portrait of Shepard's love interest can appear on the desk near the private terminal. A display case for the various ship models that you can collect throughout the adventure is also found in this room.

The Combat Information Center

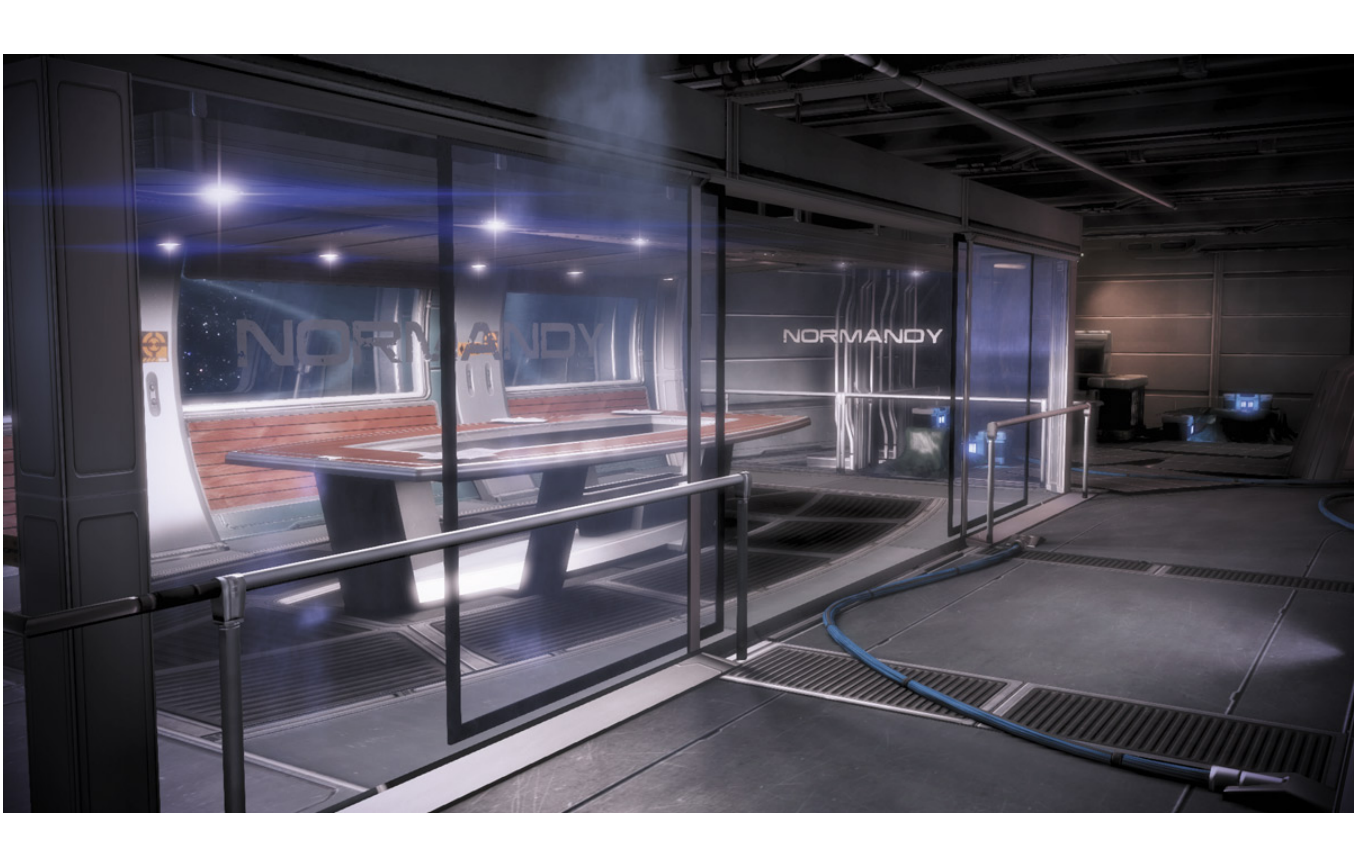


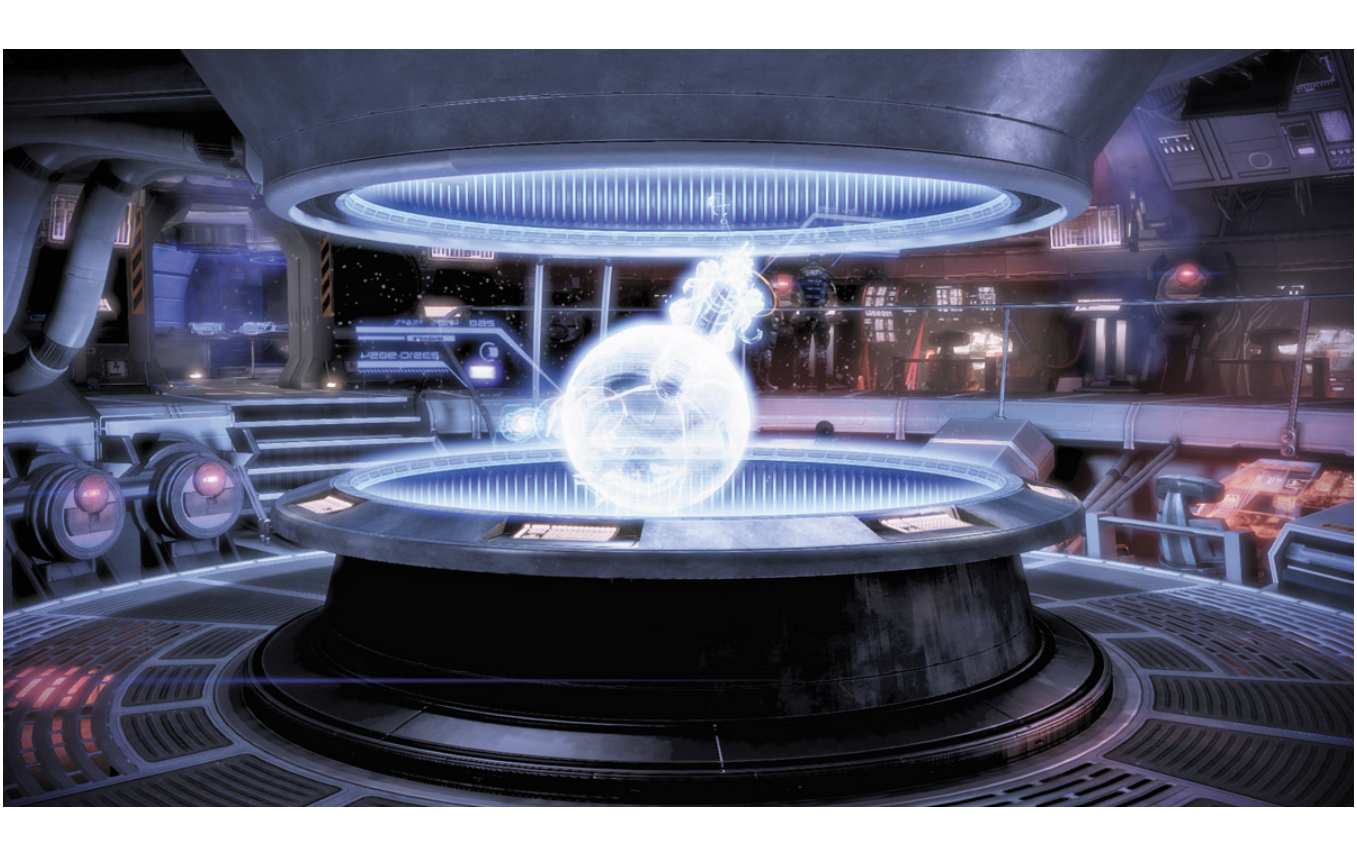


The nerve center of the Normandy has seen some dramatic overhauls.

The forward section of the Combat Information Center (CIC) retains the Galaxy Map for Shepard to direct the ship to the next destination, and there's a private terminal to receive new messages and assignments.

Joker still reigns in the forward cockpit as the pilot of the Normandy, assisted by EDI. Ensign Traynor, your communications specialist on post near the Galaxy Map, will alert you to new assignments or requests from other crew members.



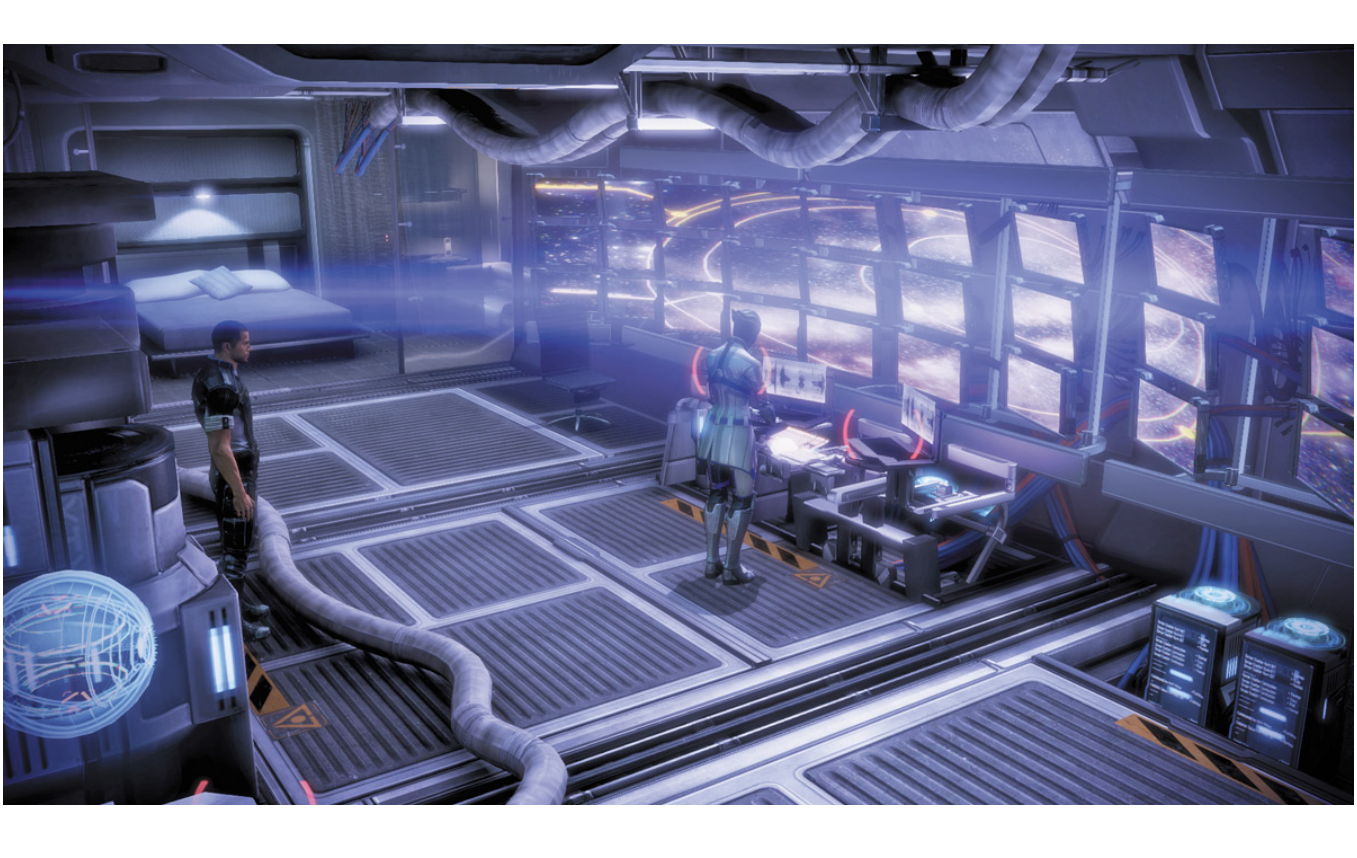


The most dramatic changes are aft of the forward CIC. A security station separates the two sections and leads directly into a meeting room and the war room.

It is in the war room that Shepard can check the status of all War Assets acquired during the course of the story and see the overall galactic Readiness rating.

Additionally, dual Quantum Entanglement Communicators allow for Shepard to receive reports from the war-torn Earth and from Admiral Hackett.

The Crew's Quarters

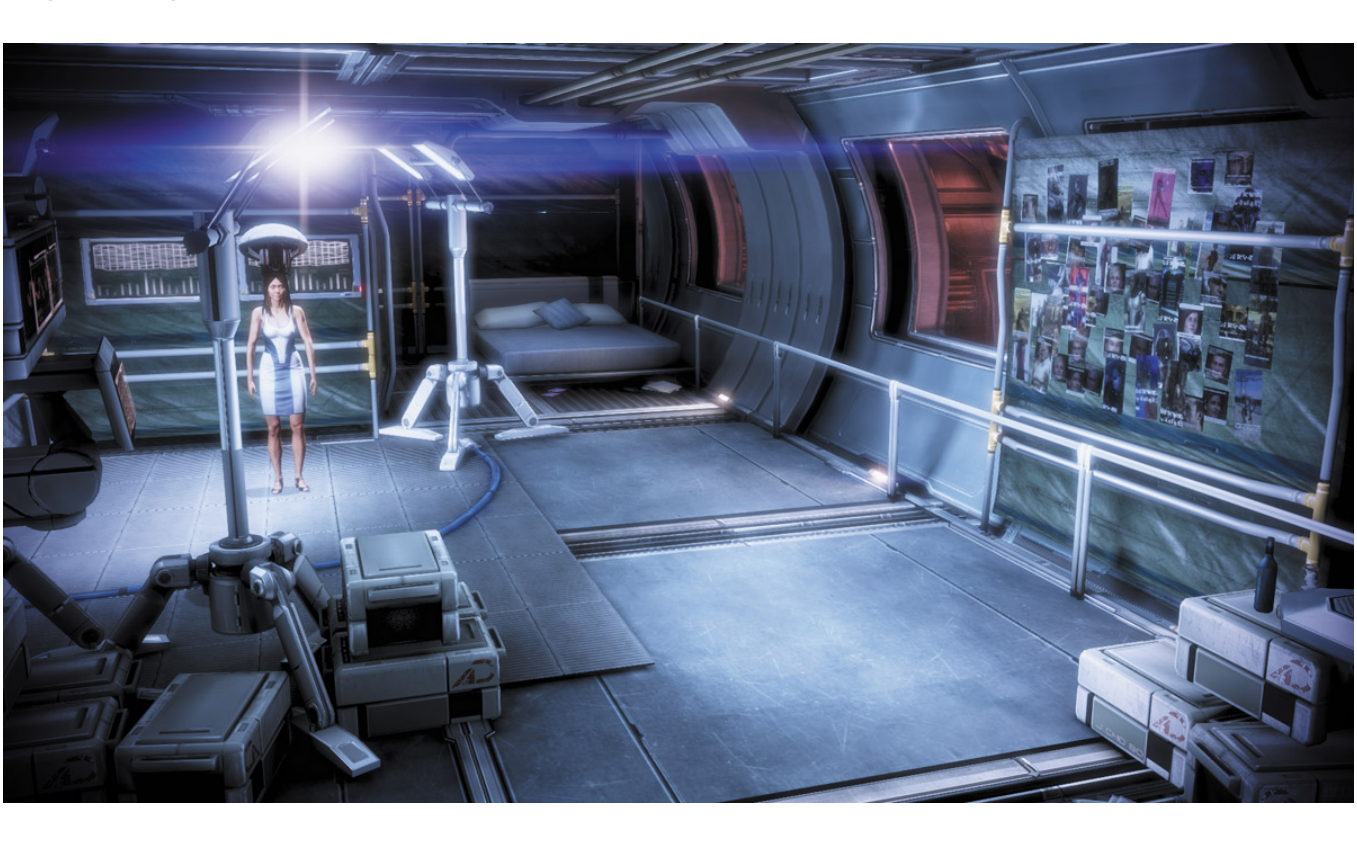


The crew's quarters is where the needs of the men and women of the Normandy are met. Entertainment is located in the port and starboard recreation lounges, and showers are available in gender-specific bathrooms.

The medbay is located on this deck, where Shepard can respec his/her powers as necessary. Across from the medbay are the executive officer's quarters, where Liara will make her home once she comes aboard the Normandy.

The calibration stations for Normandy's guns await the attention of a skilled crewman. At the center of it all, the crew mess hall provides warm meals.

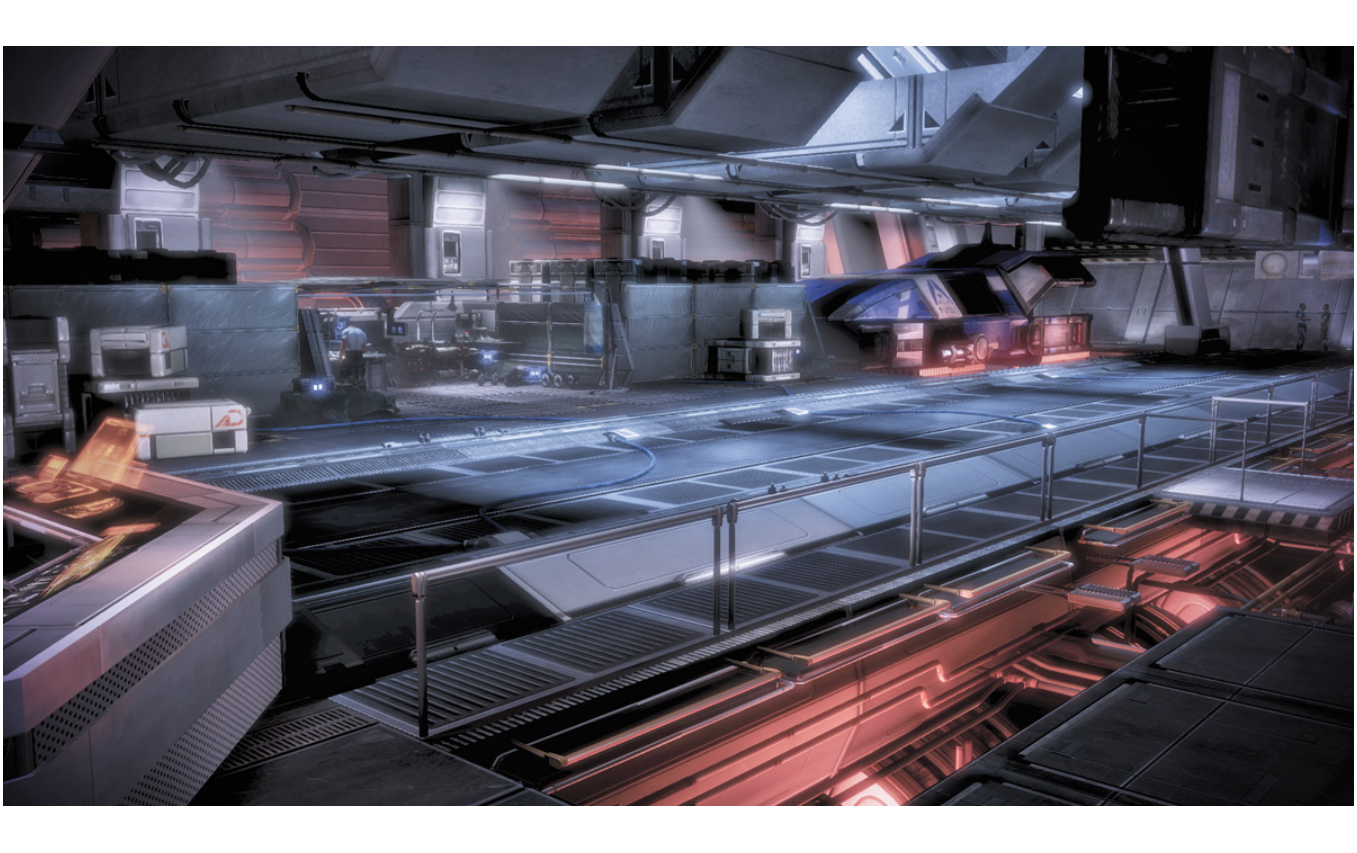
Engineering

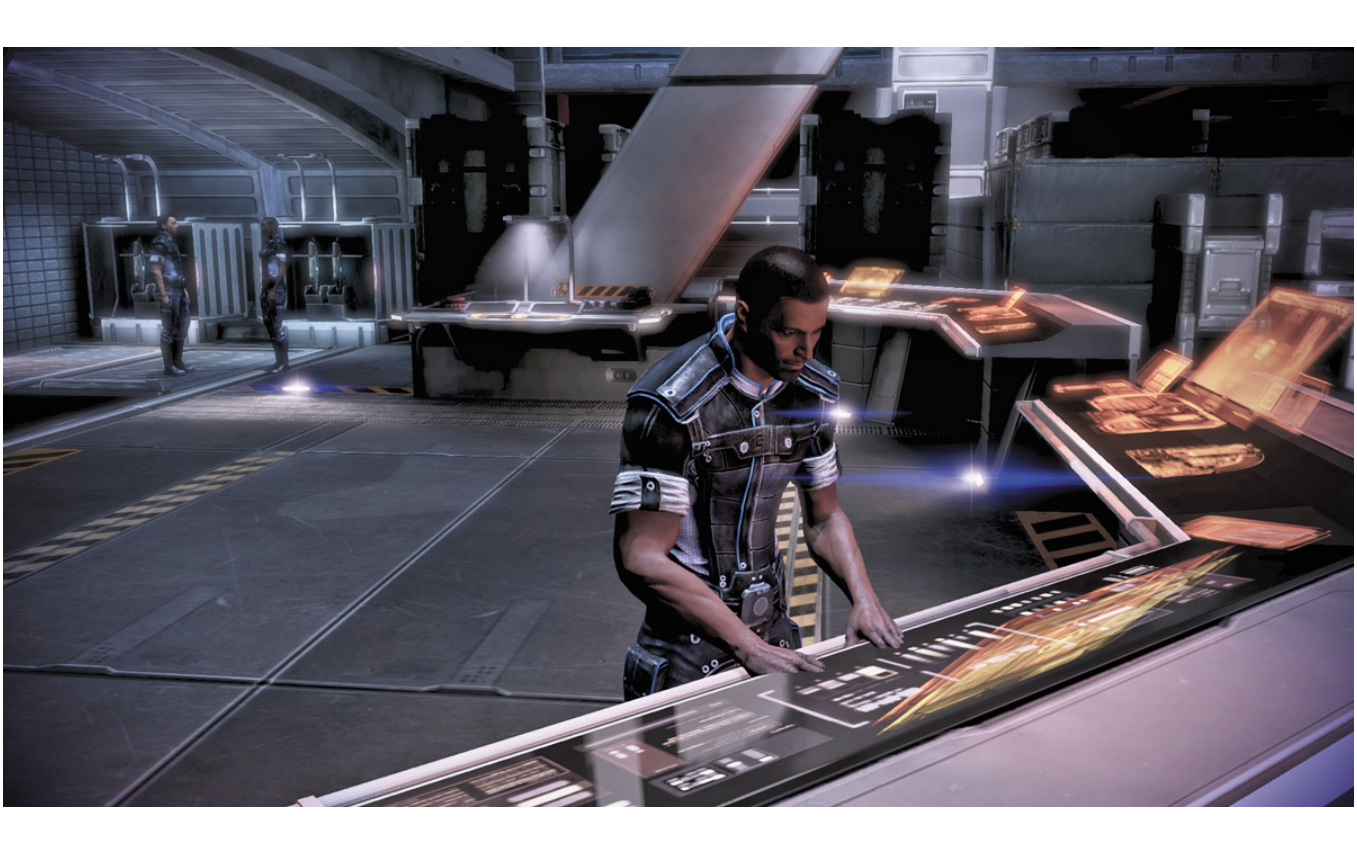


Crew Chief Adams now holds down the Normandy's engineering section, monitoring the primary drive core for any abnormalities.

This deck can also be home to crew members you pick up along the way. For example, the war reporter Diana Allers will make her home in the starboard-side cargo room.

Shuttle Bay





Similar to the old Normandy SR1, the shuttle bay contains all the vehicles needed for planet-side insertions into hostile territory. More importantly, everything you need to get ready for a mission in advance is held here.

Your shuttle pilot, Cortez, handles all requisition orders you may need to make from the Normandy, reducing time spent having to travel to the Citadel to purchase new armor or weapon mods.

The moment you access any store, Cortez will create a network with it, allowing direct purchases from the Normandy in exchange for a 10 percent increase in prices.

Weapons can also be upgraded from a terminal in the shuttle bay. Weapon upgrades are limited to a maximum of five times per weapon during the first playthrough, with the limit increased to ten on future playthroughs.

Any weapon in your possession can also be modified using any of the mods you've purchased or located during missions.

You can also set up the loadouts of Shepard and any available squadmate in advance, making it easier to get into a mission that much faster.

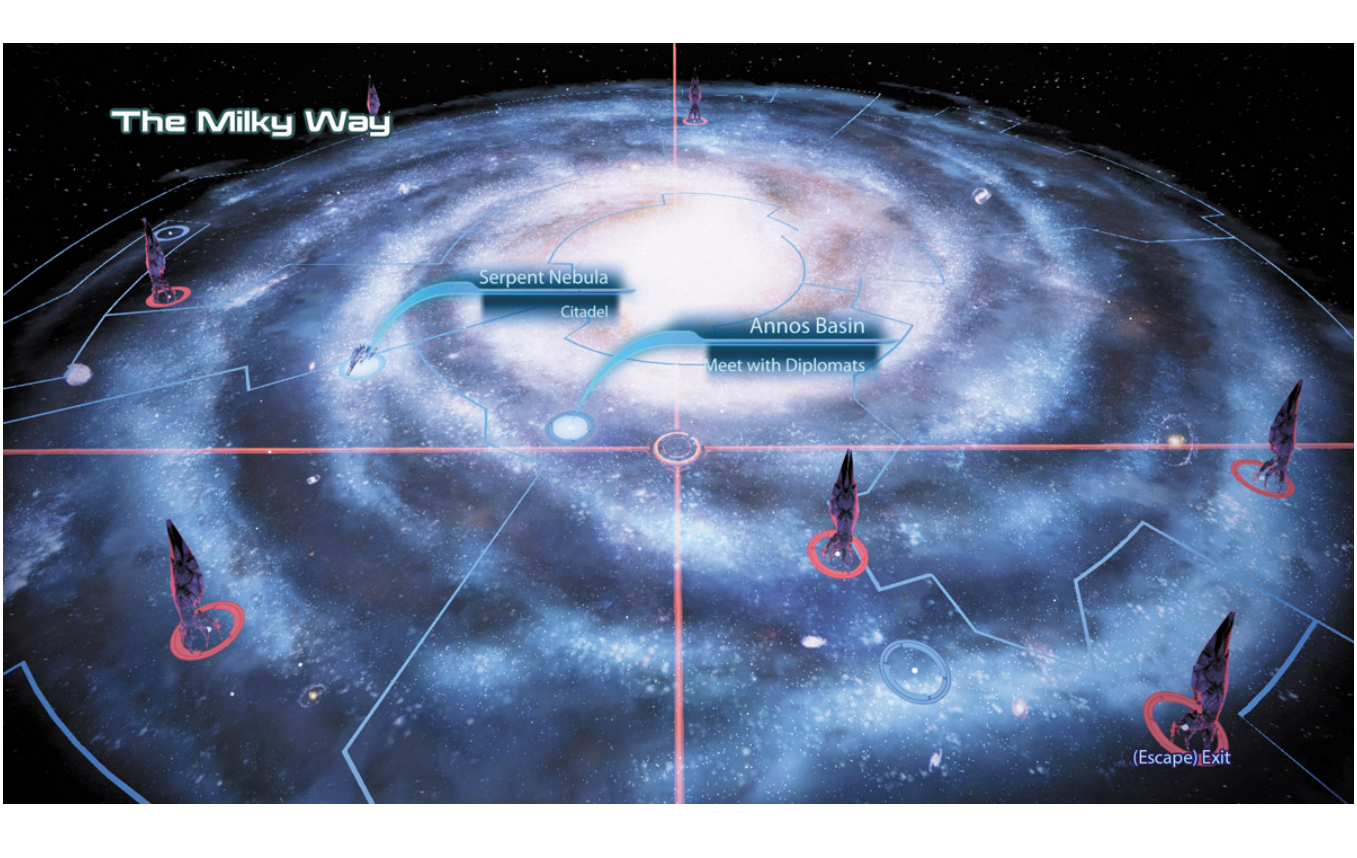
TRAVEL

As soon as you complete the initial prologue missions, the Normandy comes under your full control. You are free to roam about the galaxy as you see fit, in search of potential War Assets or salvage.

The ship can take you to any priority missions or side missions that are currently available. The ship's capabilities may be familiar to series veterans, but there are new things that have been introduced.

The Galaxy Map

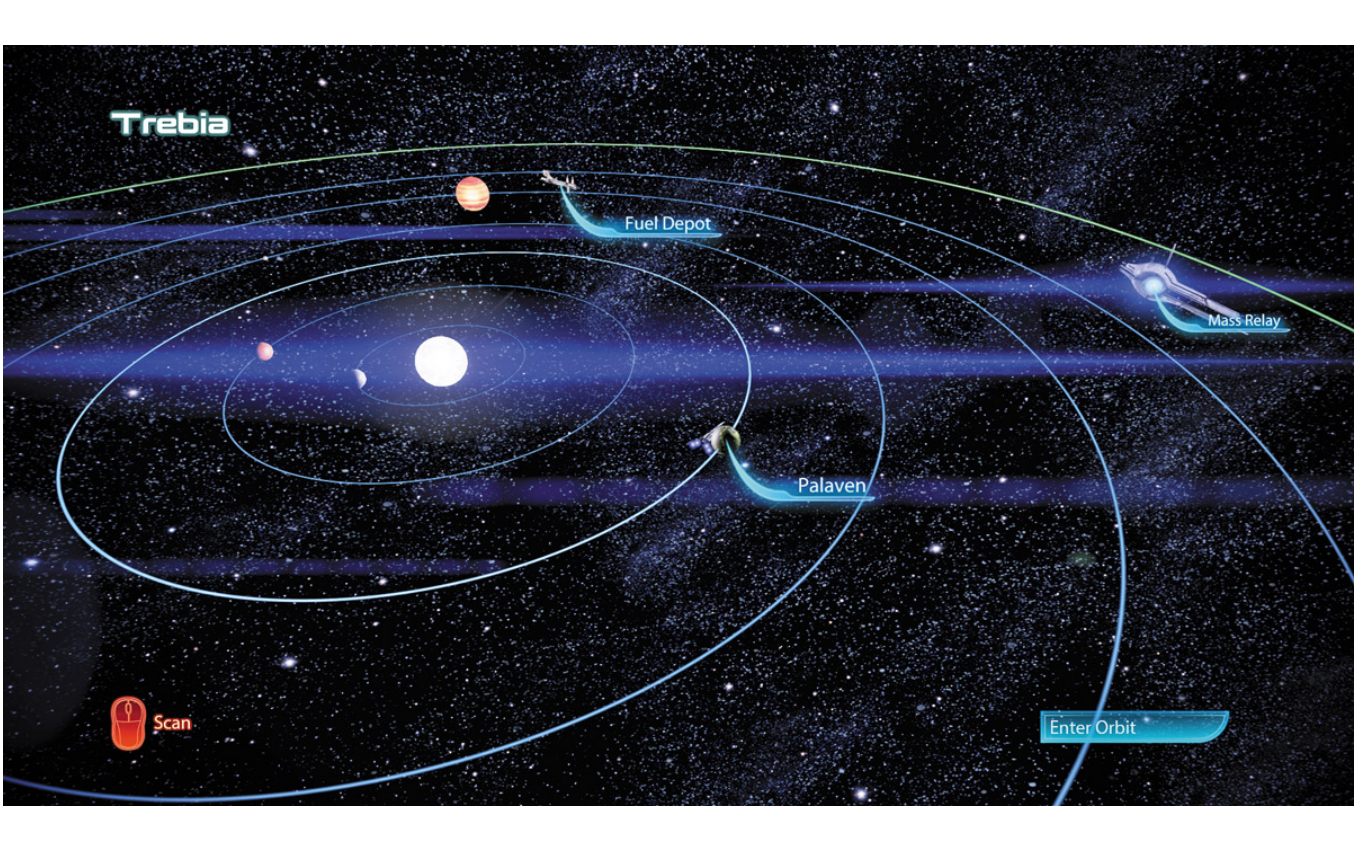
Galaxy View



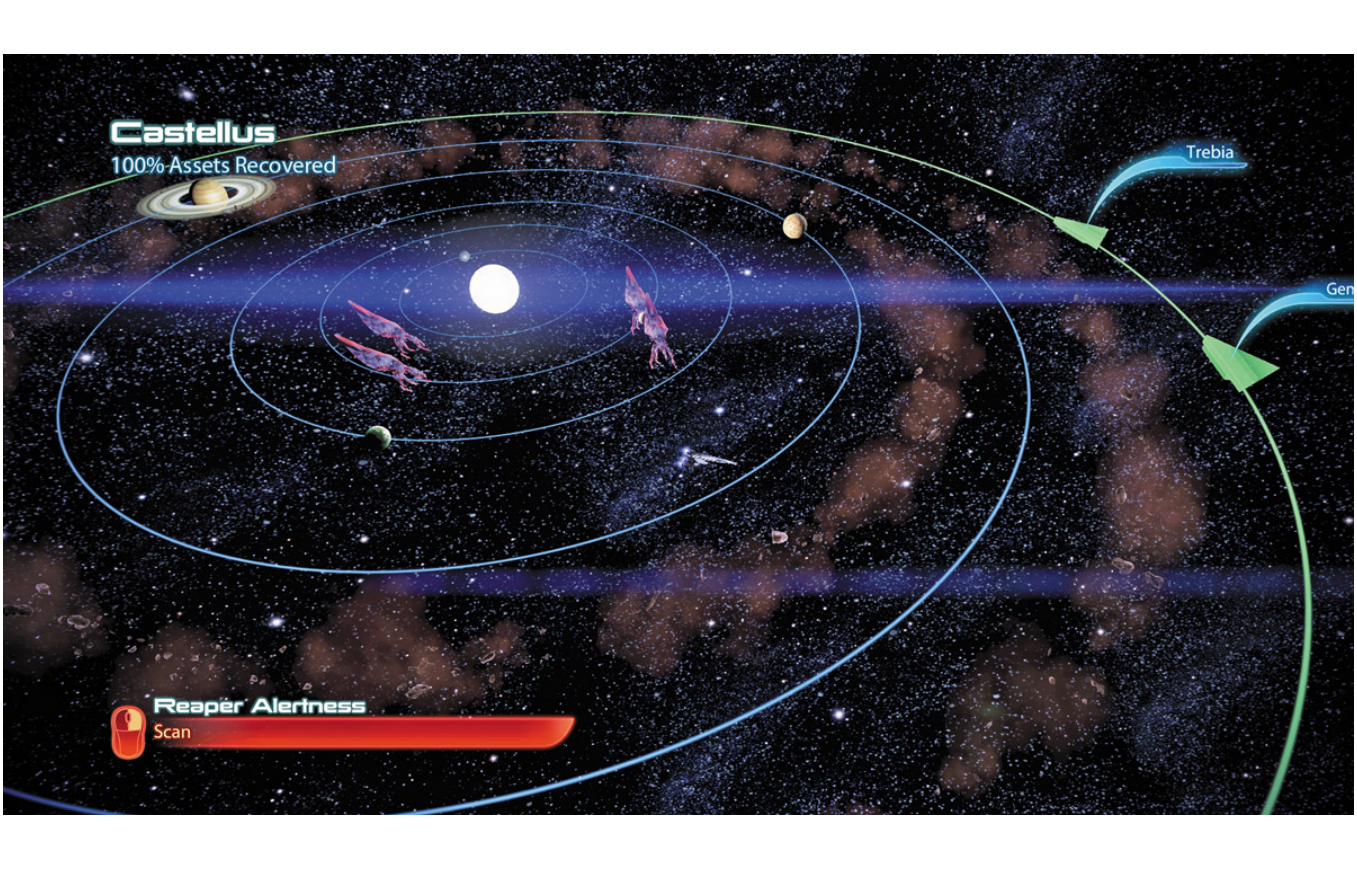
Located in the center of the CIC, the Galaxy Map allows you to chart a course between various star clusters in the galaxy.

Priority missions and major special assignments are marked on the pertinent clusters in this display.

System View



After you select a star cluster to visit, the Normandy will travel via a mass relay to the system within a cluster that contains its own relay. But things get complicated when Reapers are a factor.



The Reaper invasion has touched almost every corner of the galaxy.

As you move the Normandy through a system, you may be on an assignment that requires you to fire off a wide-range sensor pulse that will help detect any War Assets or salvage on the planets in a system.

This sensor pulse in turn is picked up by the Reapers.

A Reaper Awareness bar will appear onscreen, letting you know that the Reapers are tracking you.

If the bar becomes full, all of the Reapers on the outskirts of a system will come after you, and if they catch the Normandy, they will destroy it, no questions asked.

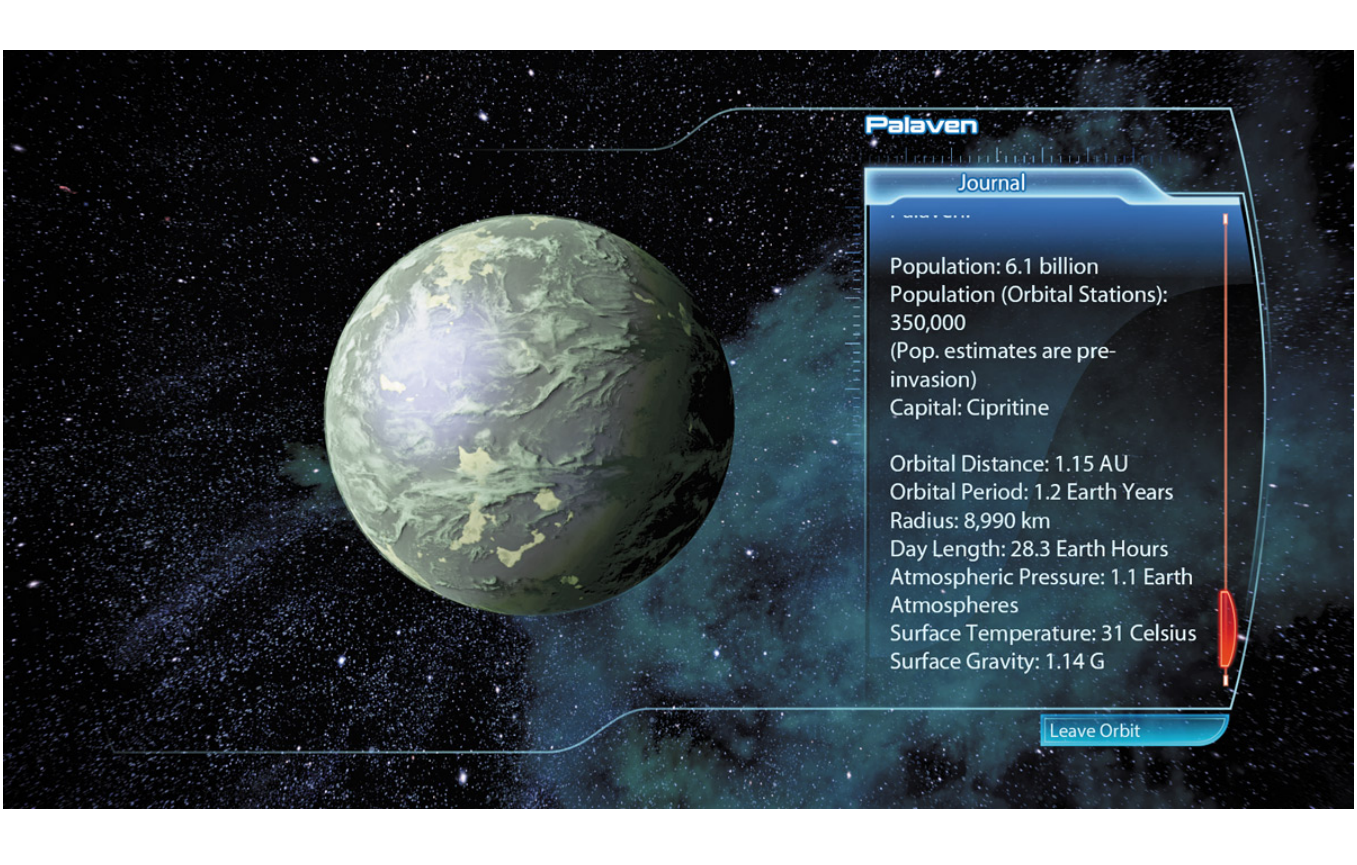
CAUTION

Once the Reapers are alerted, they will eventually catch you. The Normandy is not fast enough to outrun them forever; they will eventually accelerate to speeds far beyond what the Normandy can manage.

Your only defense in this case is to leave the system altogether.

If there's a planet that you need to scan but the Reapers are already alerted, try to leave the system, then come back, making a beeline for the planet. Get your business over with, and get out!

Orbital View



Population: 6.1 billion
Population (Orbital Stations): 350,000
(Pop. estimates are pre-invasion)
Capital: Cipritine

Orbital Distance: 1.15 AU
Orbital Period: 1.2 Earth Years
Radius: 8,990 km
Day Length: 28.3 Earth Hours
Atmospheric Pressure: 1.1 Earth Atmospheres
Surface Temperature: 31 Celsius
Surface Gravity: 1.14 G

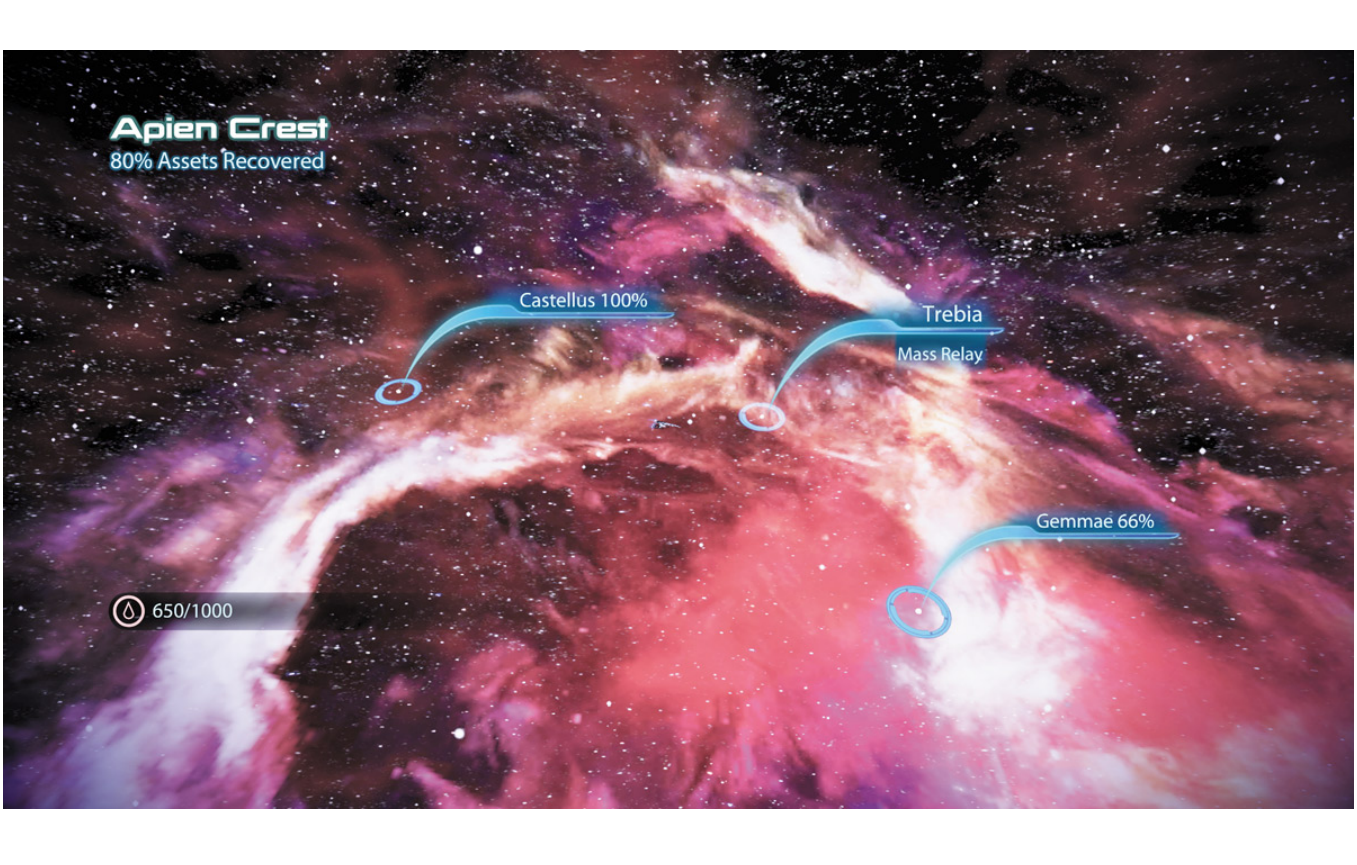
This view is available when you close in on a planet and select to orbit it. Previously in *Mass Effect 2* , you needed to scan every world for resources and fire off probes to collect them. This is not the case with *Mass Effect 3* .

You can scan and probe planets only if the sensors picked up something of value in the System View mode. For missions that require the squad to be deployed, you can select to land on the planet from this display.

CAUTION

Orbiting a planet is not enough to shake Reapers off your trail once they have been alerted! They will simply wait for you to break orbit before continuing their pursuit.

Cluster View

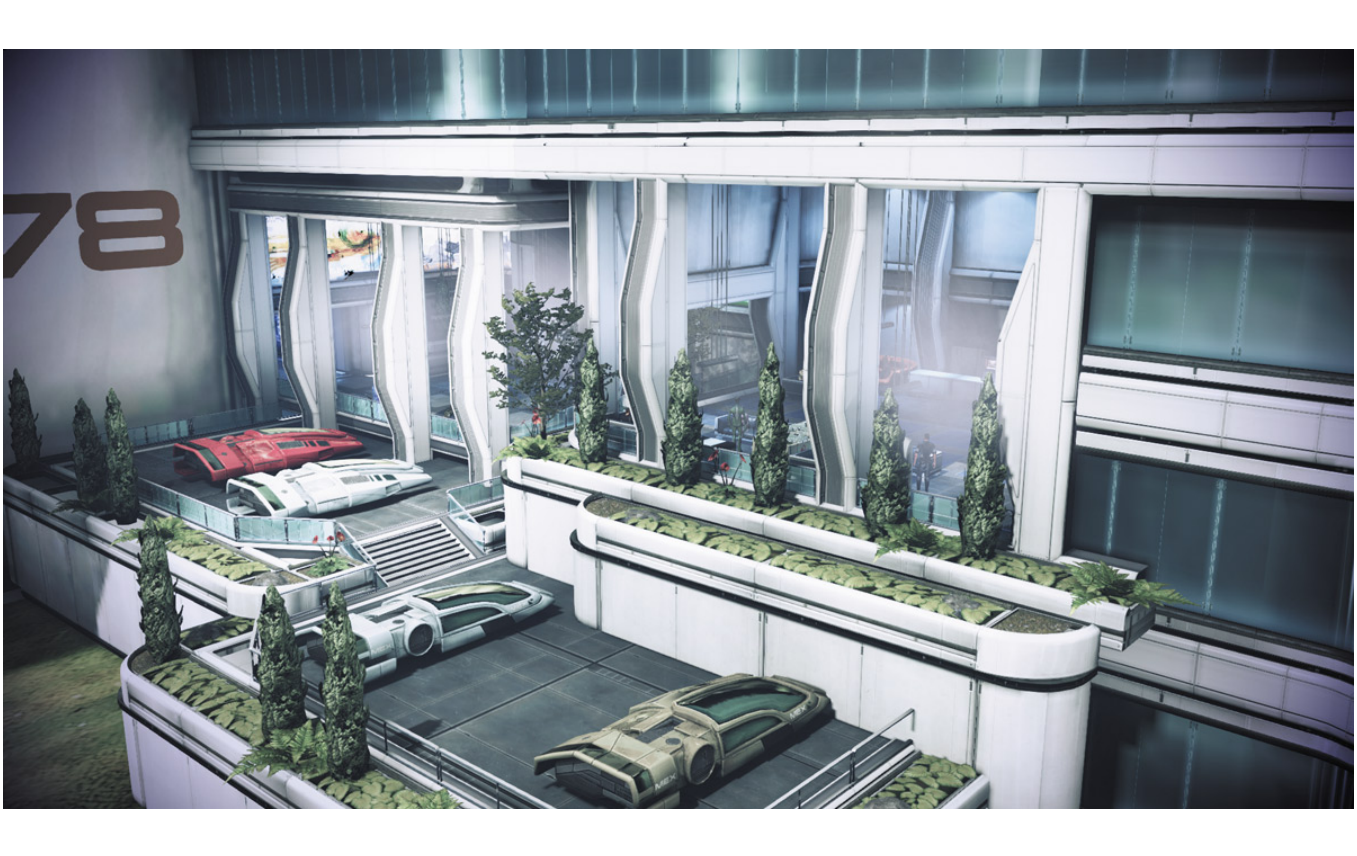


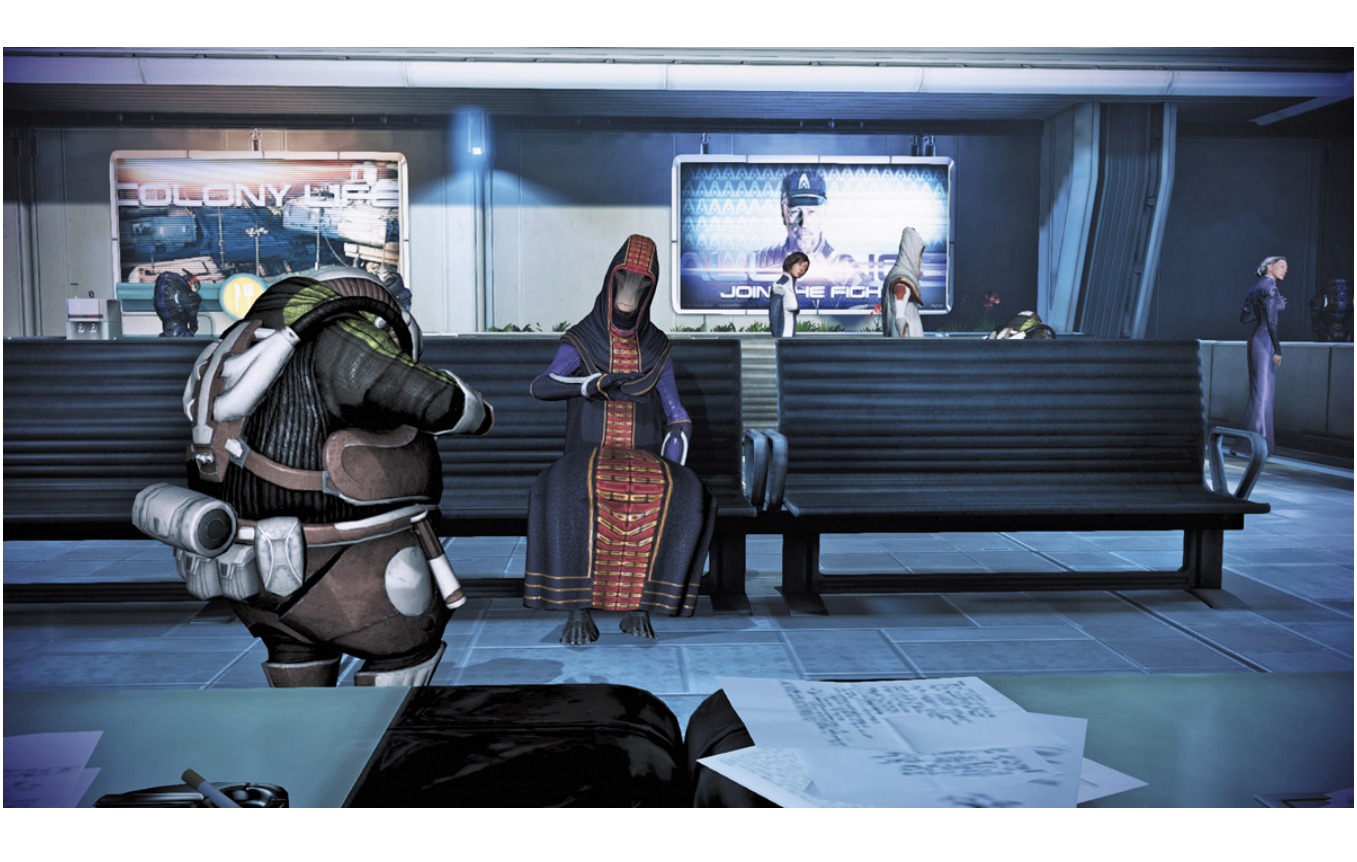
Travel between solar systems switches the Galaxy Map to this view mode. The big difference in traveling through this view is that it requires fuel.

Running out of fuel between systems is highly inadvisable since it forces the Normandy back to the system with the mass relay.

Given that not every system has a convenient fuel depot available, returning to a Reaper-infested area could be the last thing you ever do. Consider that before beginning intersystem travel within a cluster.

THE CITADEL





Still the center of galactic civilization, the Citadel is a massive construct once believed to be abandoned by the highly advanced Protheans over 50,000 years ago.

The dark truth is that the Citadel was actually a mass relay of epic proportions, to be activated by the Reaper vanguard Sovereign and usher in a full invasion, years before galactic civilization could even hope to begin mounting a counterattack.

Commander Shepard was able to stop this, with the help of some very good allies, but it was not enough to fully deter the Reapers. They have finally come.

The Citadel is a place of constant transition throughout the story of *Mass Effect 3* .

Many side quests become available here between every major assignment, and you can miss these forever if you progress beyond a certain point in the story, as the Citadel begins to feel the effects of the war to greater degrees.

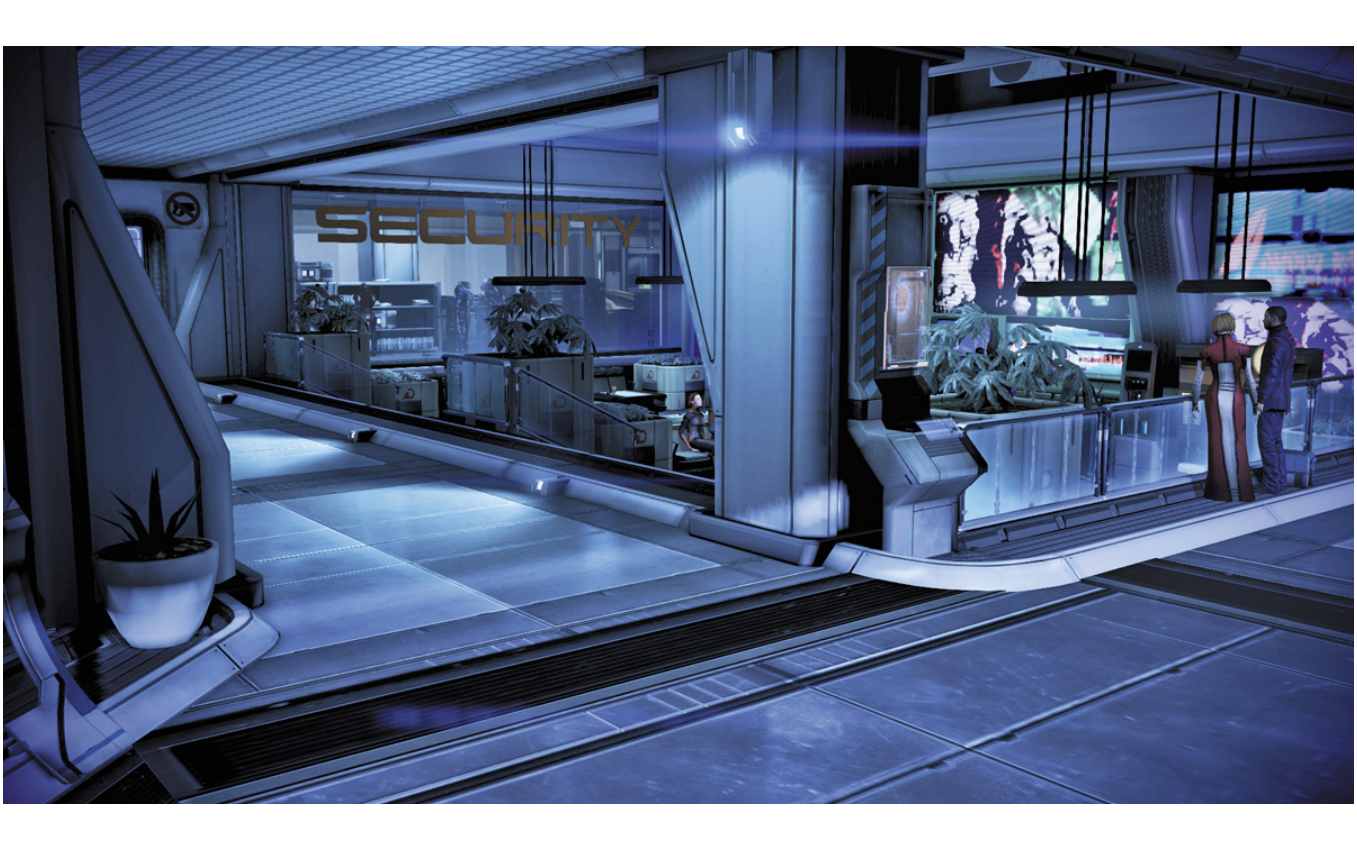
In addition to side quests that can start from conversations on the Citadel, it is a place to buy weapon mods and armor pieces that will be critical to your success, without the 10 percent extra tacked on to purchases aboard the Normandy.

Whenever the Normandy docks at the Citadel, your crew will also disembark for shore leave, trying to decompress from all the pressure the war is heaping upon them.

It is possible to earn Paragon, Renegade, and Reputation points just by talking to them.

There are a total of six levels to explore on the Citadel, each serving their own purpose (see *Citidal Maps* for labeled maps).

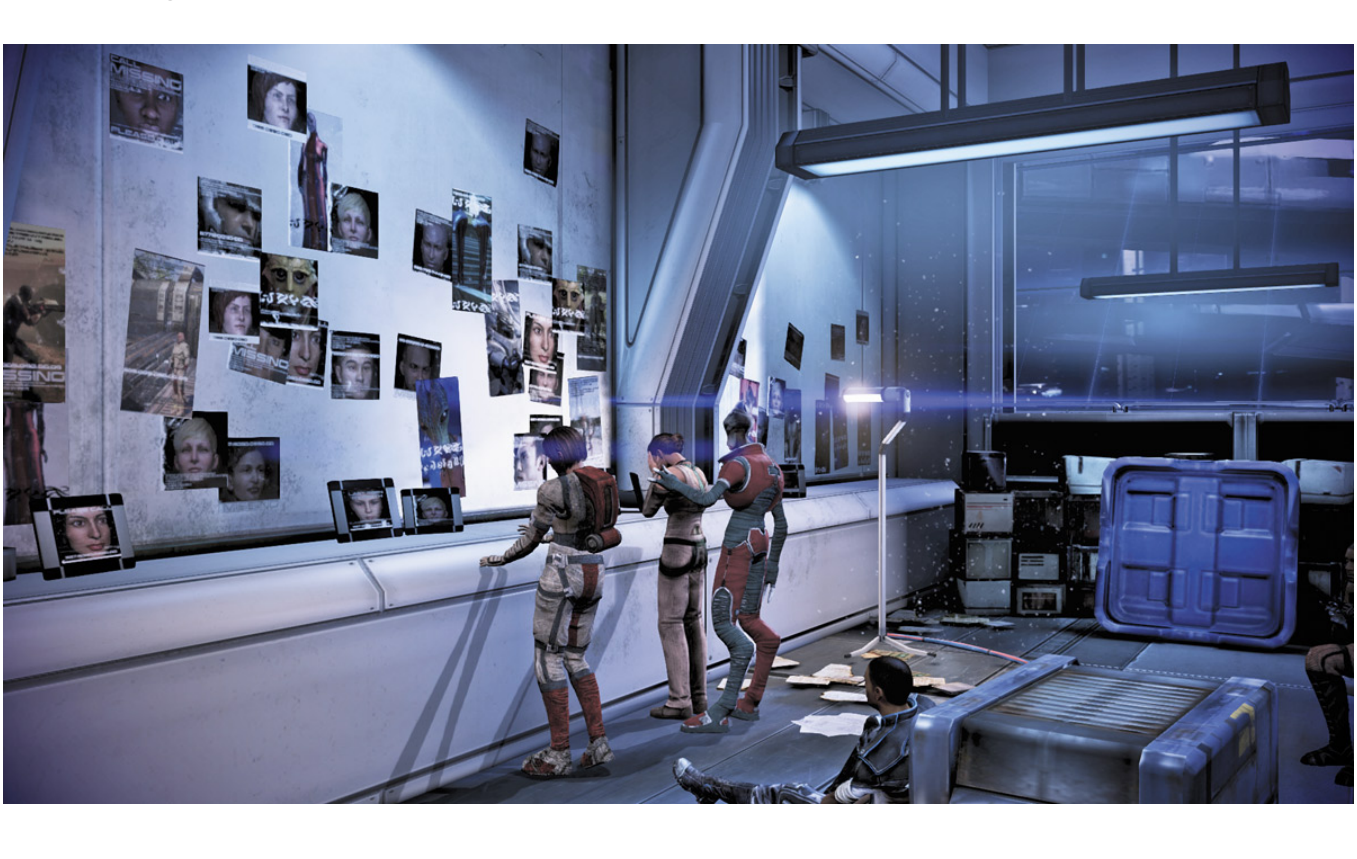
Normandy Dock: D24



D24 is where you first arrive on the Citadel during the early events of *Mass Effect 3* .

It is a small and cramped location, but you may meet a squad member from Shepard's past here. You also see the war reporter Diana Allers here, initially.

Dock Refugee Camp

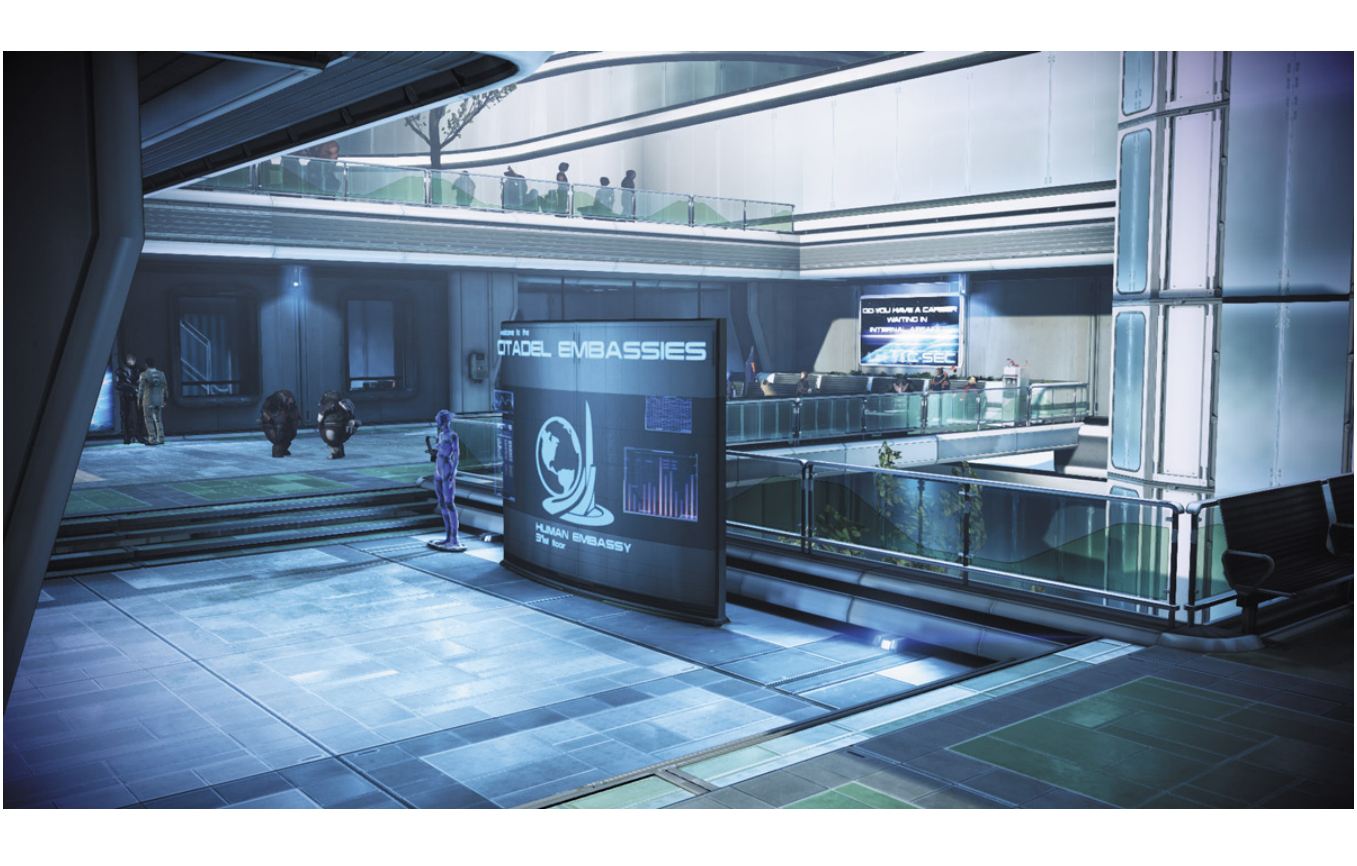


Initially, you do not have access to this level of the Citadel, but once you do, several side quests transpire in this location.

More importantly, survivors of the Batarian Hegemony have turned up here in droves after the devastating opening days of the Reaper onslaught and have set up a shop where purchases can be made.

You may also find a squadmate during visits to the Citadel here, helping injured refugees from stricken worlds.

Citadel Embassies

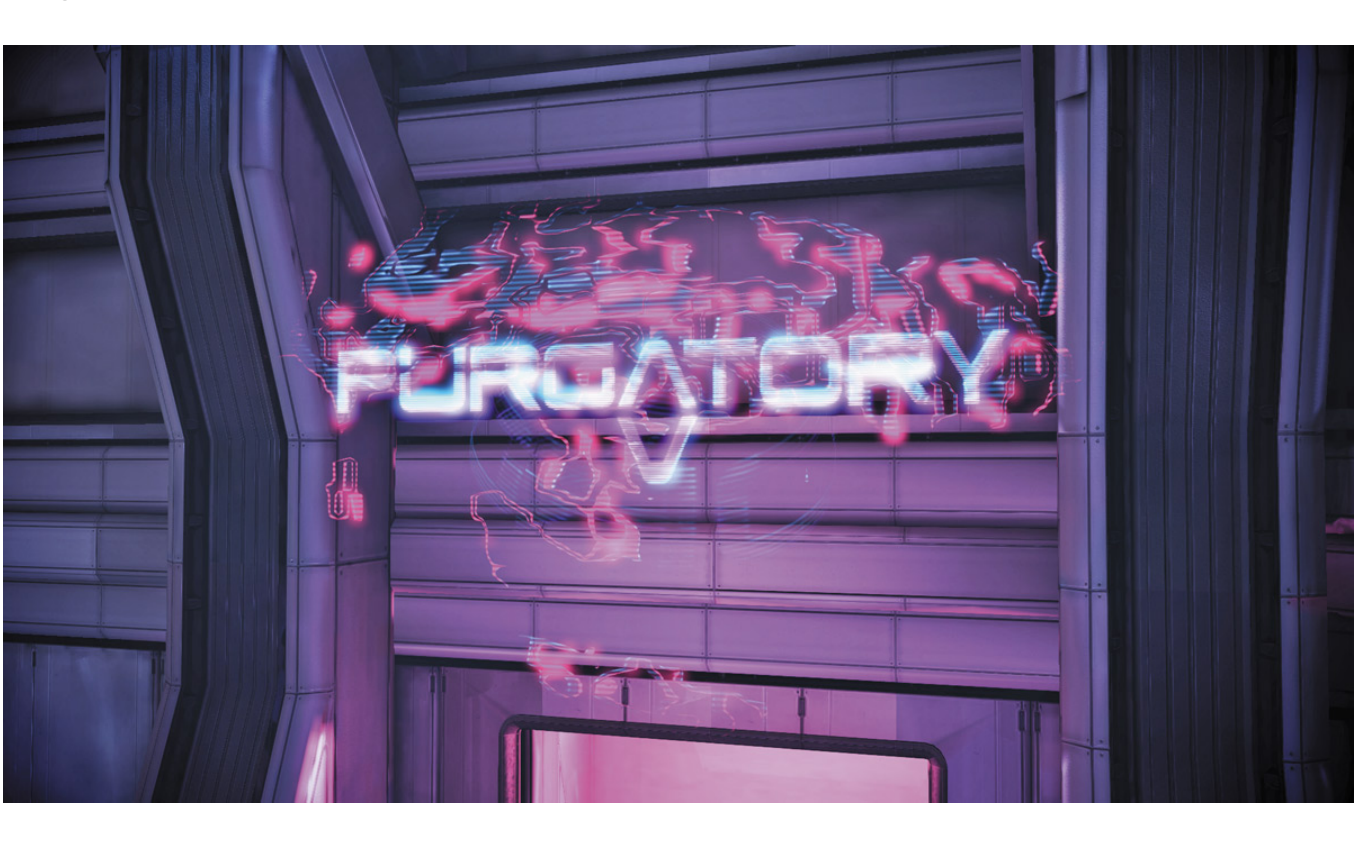


The heart of politics in the galaxy, the Citadel Embassies is a hub of frenzied activity that only grows as the war drags on. Many side missions start at the embassies, with numerous returning characters making appearances here.

The Embassies have three major offices accessible to Shepard:

- **C-Sec Commander's Office:** Promoted by Counselor Udina, Commander Bailey holds court in his office. He is a valuable contact for all things C-Sec related.
- **Human Embassy:** The current human representative on the Council, Donnel Udina, has his main office on this level of the Citadel. Your initial dealings with the Council are facilitated by him at this office.
- **Spectre Requisitions:** After being reinstated as a Spectre, you also get access to Spectre exclusive data resources and the opportunity to buy three of the most expensive weapons in the game. This is definitely a set of weapons you'll want to buy from the Citadel proper, as ordering from the Normandy adds a 10 percent tax to these weapons, and they already cost a significant amount as is!

Purgatory Bar

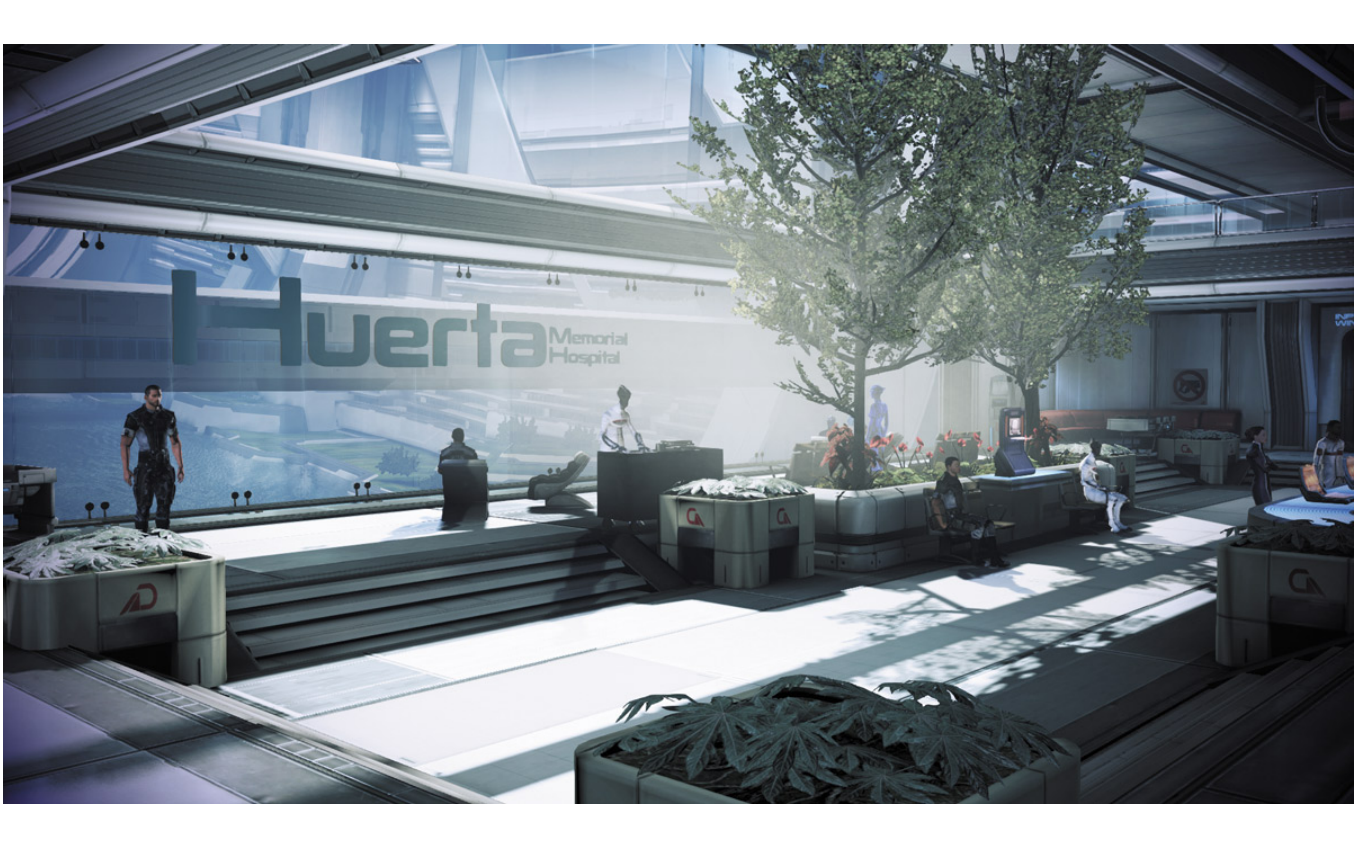


Holding court here in the wildest (and unsanctioned) club on the Citadel is Aria, the most feared crime boss on Omega.

Her reasons for being here and not on her home turf will become clear once you finish speaking with her.

James Vega can be found here, along with soldiers of various species all trying to keep their minds off of the war, even for just a short while.

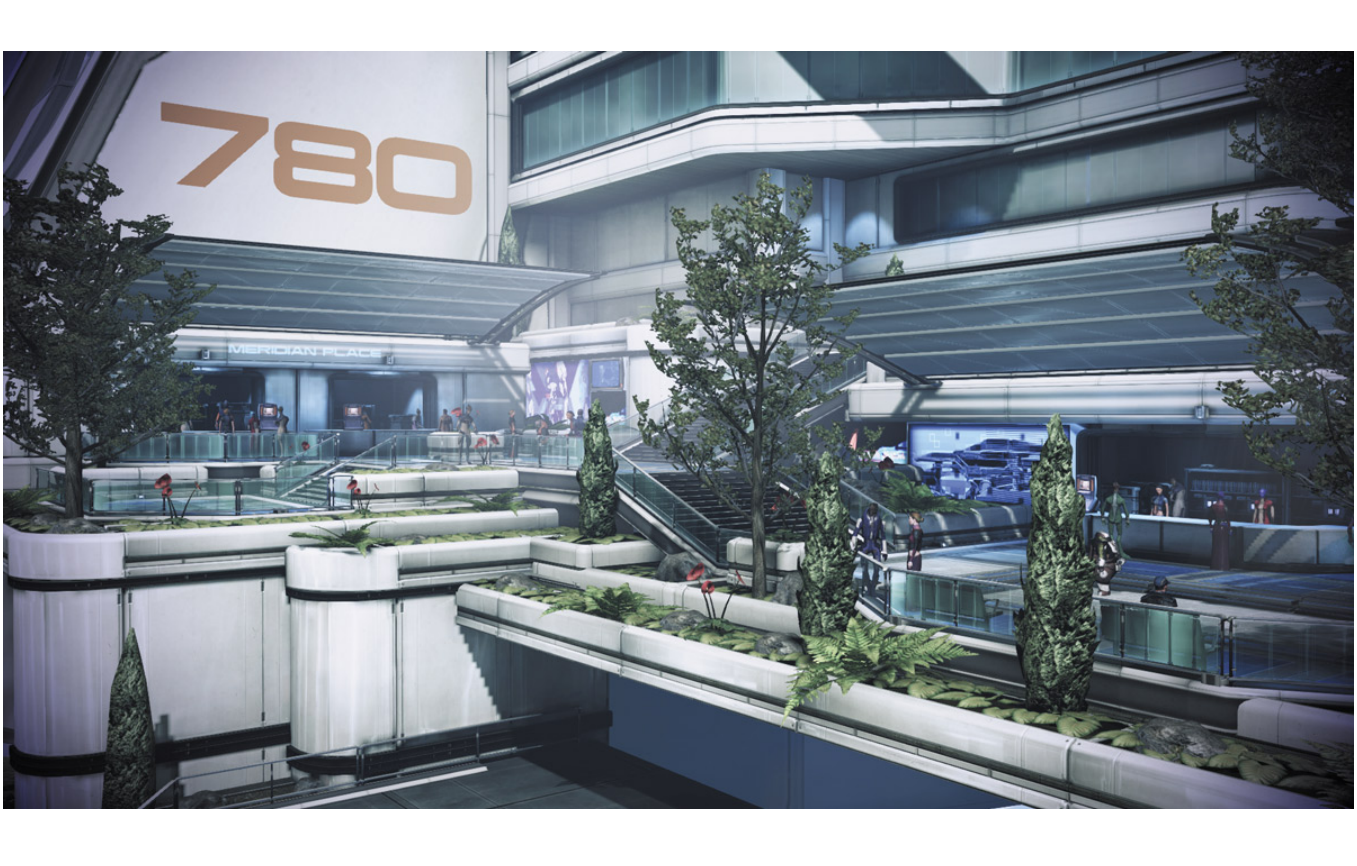
Huerta Memorial Hospital



Already busy when you first arrive on the Citadel, this hospital is gearing up for a veritable flood of casualties as the war heats up.

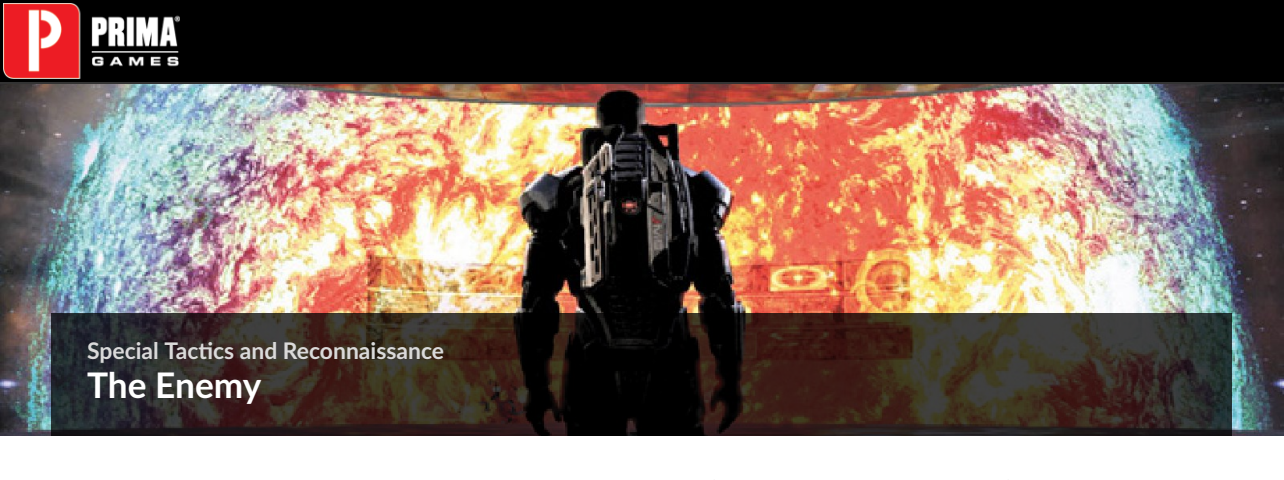
Pay attention to the various doctors roaming the facility with each visit; you might hear opportunities to gain some valuable War Assets, or even see some familiar faces among the crowd.

Presidium Commons



The largest and busiest part of the Citadel, the Presidium Commons contains the majority of the stores the Normandy can network with, providing the bulk of your purchasable armor and weapon modifications.

Many side quests will take you to and from the Commons, so get to know the area well.



Special Tactics and Reconnaissance

The Enemy

Now that you know how to prepare for a fight and what to do once you're actually in the middle of one, it's time to see what you're up against.

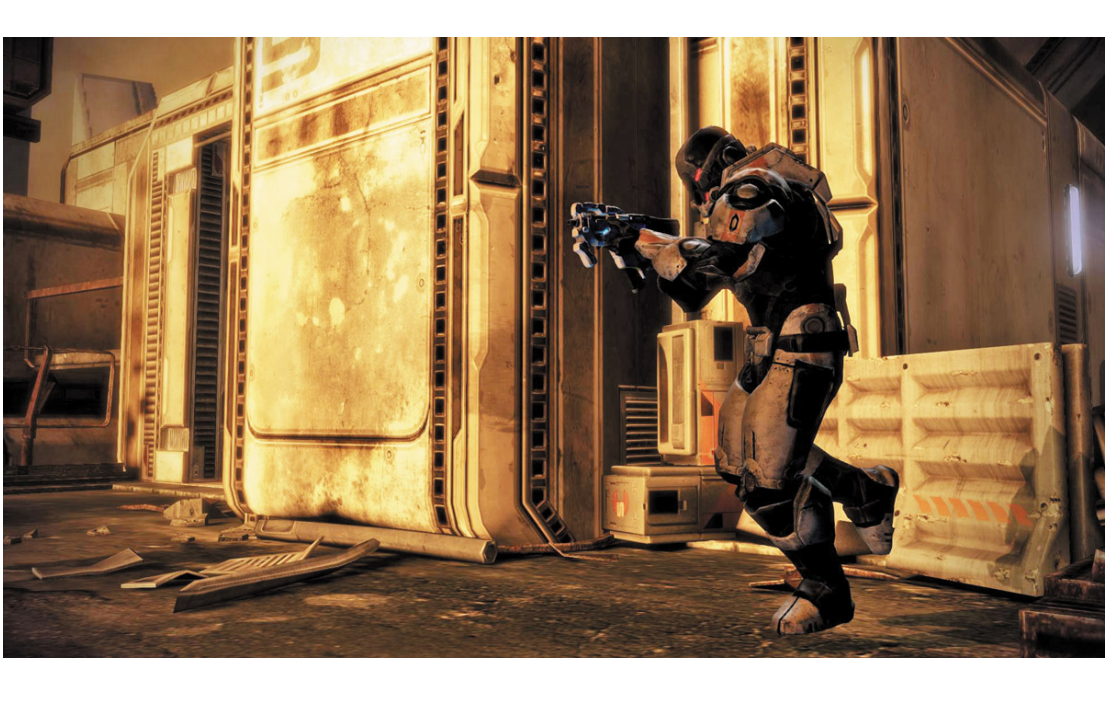
CERBERUS

While the Reapers are the greatest threat to the entire galaxy, Cerberus's actions throughout the conflict, from start to finish, cannot be underestimated.

The Illusive Man's forces have dallied with extremely dangerous technologies derived from the Reapers to enhance themselves to better fight the forces of the Citadel and further weaken already-failing alliances.

Tactically proficient and very well armed, Cerberus forces provide some of the most intense cat-and-mouse battles throughout the game.

Assault Trooper



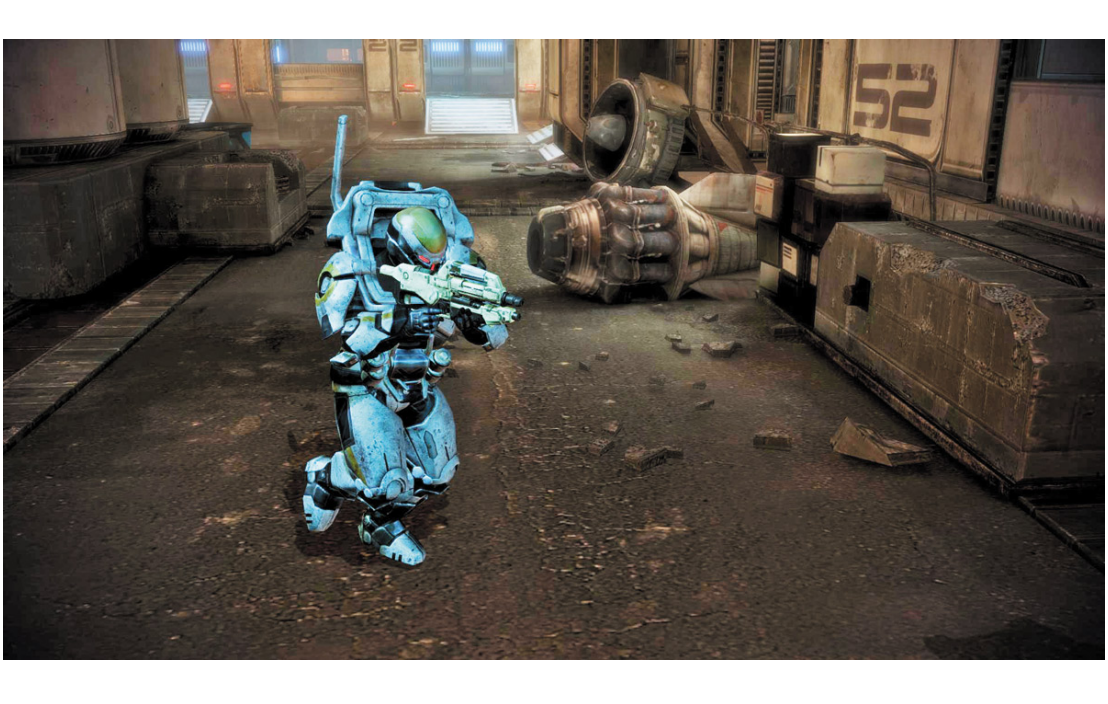
Armament: M-25 Hornet Submachine gun, electrically charged shock stick, frag grenades

Threat Level: Low to medium

Being the most basic soldier of the Cerberus forces does not make Assault Troopers harmless. On the contrary, their aggressiveness tends to place them on your flanks while driving you out of cover with well-placed grenades.

The lack of shielding makes them susceptible to Biotic attacks, but they possess the uncanny ability to combat roll out of harm's way, evading Biotics and Techs with alarming frequency in the higher difficulties.

Centurion



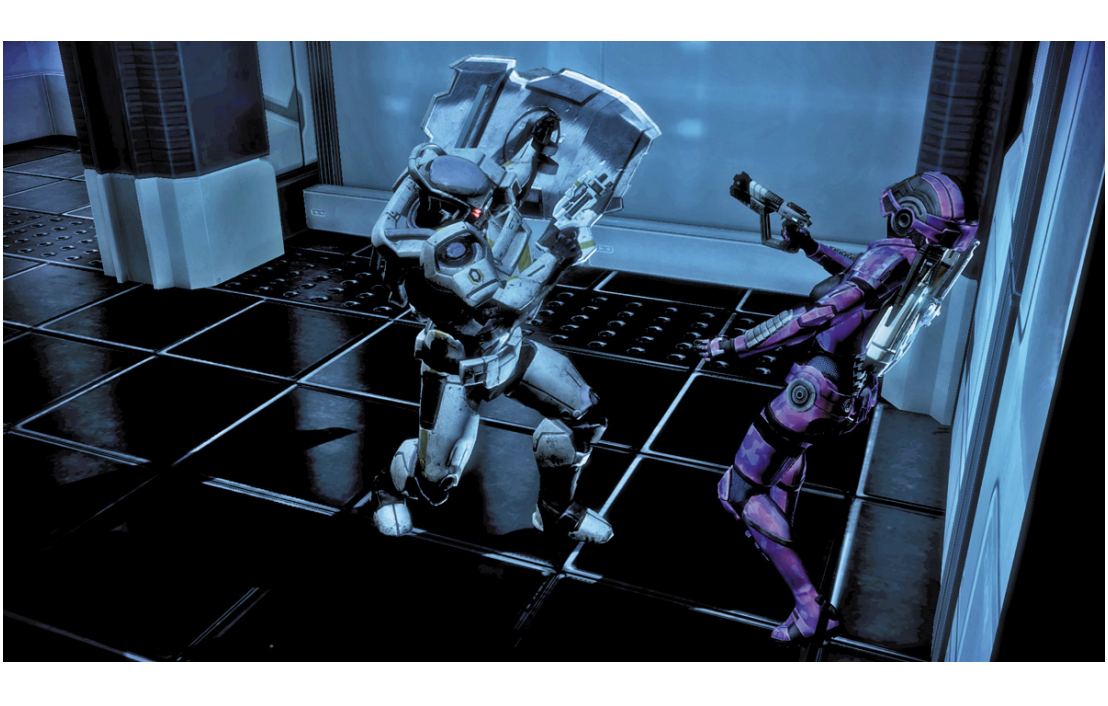
Armament: M-96 Augmented Mattock Assault Rifle, electrically charged shock stick, smoke and frag grenades

Threat Level: Medium to High

Larger and tougher than Assault Troopers, Centurions have armor with shielding, making them tougher targets to kill. The semiautomatic rifles they wield possess great stopping power at any range, and as always, they will try to flush out stubborn players with frag grenades.

What makes the Centurion a real threat is the smoke grenade, which can cover wide swaths of the battlefield with obscuring clouds to disguise potential flanking maneuvers or ambushes.

Guardian



Armament: M-358 Talon Pistol, ballistic shield

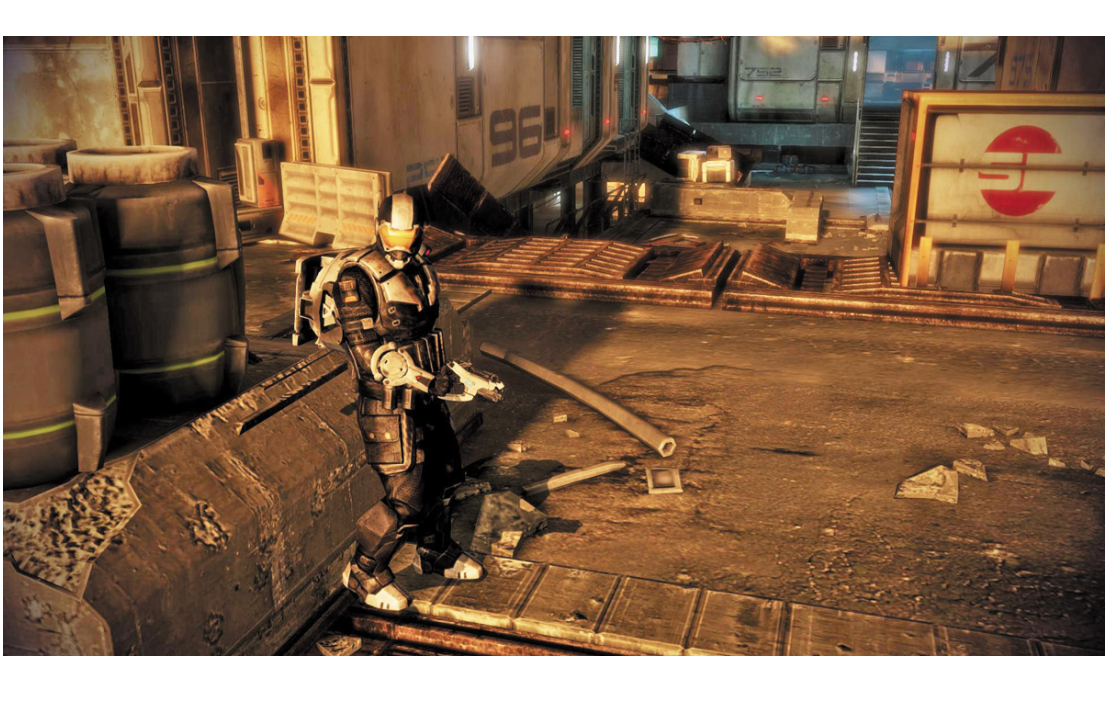
Threat Level: Medium

Slow-moving, the Guardians do not seem initially too dangerous when compared to other Cerberus units, until you notice just how resilient their ballistic shields really are as they march through barrages of fire, get close to you or a squadmate, and start beating them senseless with those shields.

The heavy shields offer Guardians excellent protection from threats directly in front of them, save for the view slot carved into the shield. Sniper rifles or any sufficiently accurate weapon can put rounds through the slot for headshots on the Guardian.

Biotics can use a wide variety of powers such as Cluster Grenades, Singularity, and Pull to quickly get the shield away from them.

Combat Engineer



Armament: M-5 Phalanx Pistol, sentry turret, repair tools

Threat Level: High

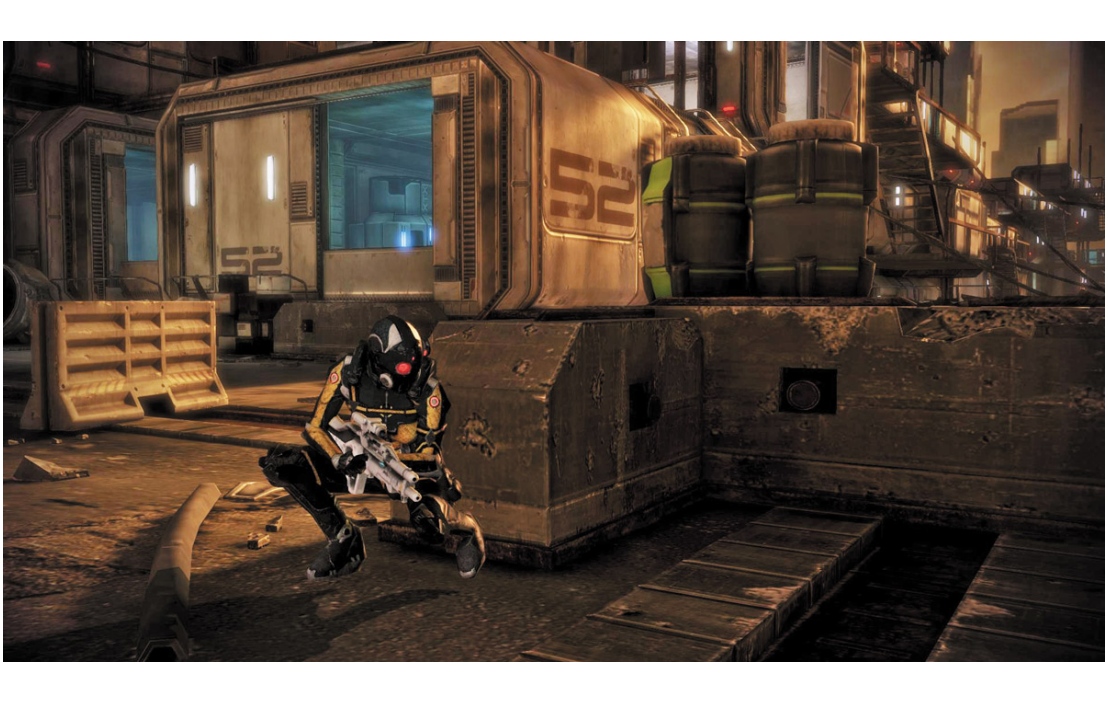
By itself, a Combat Engineer is not intimidating. What it can bring to the battlefield, however, is very intimidating. The sentry turrets they can deploy can suppress a squad in a very short time, causing extreme damage on exposed characters.

Their shields and armor also ensure a turret can survive concentrated fire, but even worse, an Engineer can use their repair kits to keep them up and running, even while under fire!

In a battle consisting of multiple units, target the Engineers first, as their turrets and repair abilities can shift the battle dramatically against you.

Be mindful of their presence when the Cerberus Atlas is in play, as Engineers like to constantly repair their shields and armor.

Nemesis



Armament: M-13 Raptor Sniper Rifle

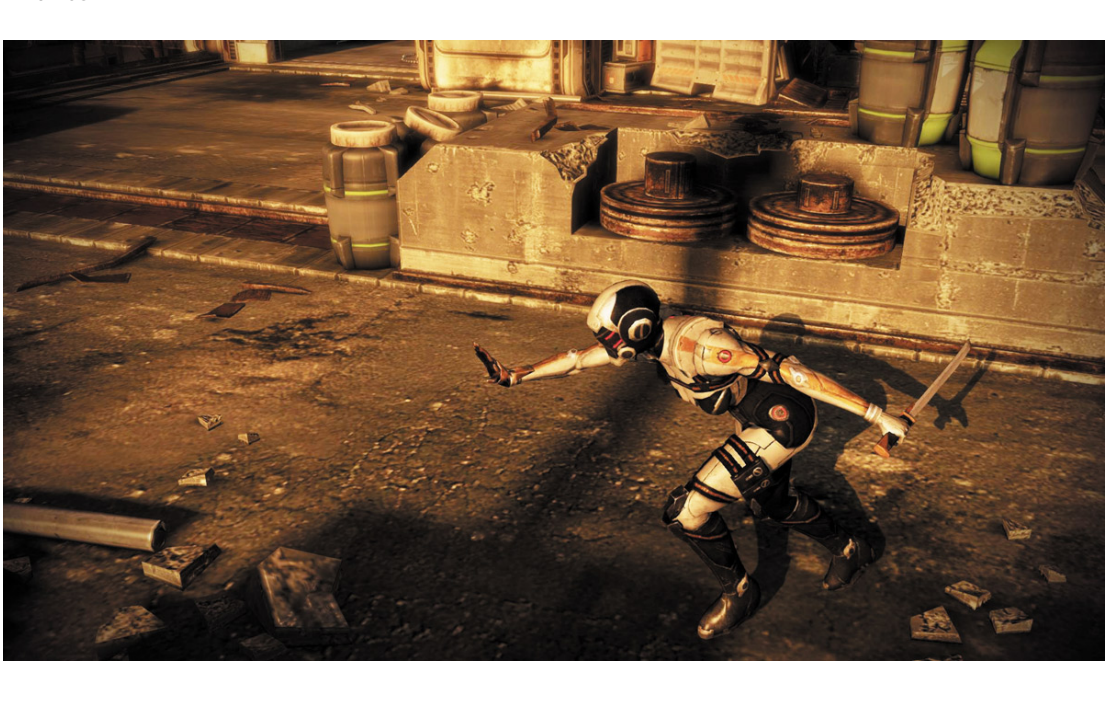
Threat Level: Medium to high

Fast on their feet and accurate with their rifles, the Nemesis is aptly named, hounding Shepard and any squadmates who stay still for too long. Nemesis snipers tend to shoot any part of a target that is even remotely exposed, a dangerous habit when combined with a height advantage.

Fortunately, they aren't very tough once their shields are exposed. If possible, have a squadmate hit a Nemesis with Cryo Blast to slow them down; even if their shields are still up, it will help with drawing a bead on them.

On higher difficulties, the damage caused by a Nemesis is substantial, making them priority targets if the enemy is still at a decent distance away from you.

Phantom



Armament: Sword, high-powered arm cannon, Biotic defenses, tactical cloak

Threat Level: High

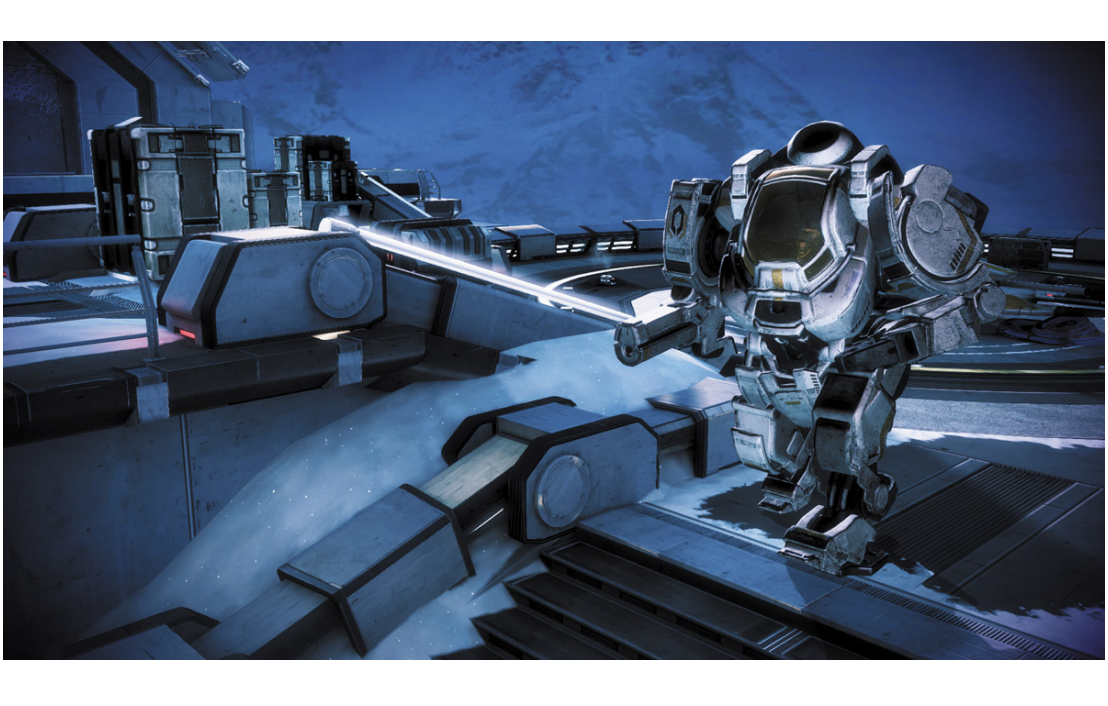
Arguably the most dangerous opponent for its size, Phantoms employ heavy use of their tactical cloaks to slip around a player's view and strike their flanks. Their Biotic barriers are incredibly resistant to many Techs, combat powers, and gunfire.

To make matters worse, Phantoms can literally brush aside incoming powers and fire. Their swords are further cause for headache, as they can deflect incoming fire and are an instantly lethal melee weapon up close.

It is possible to shoot the sword out of a foe's hand to take away their instant-kill ability, but it's difficult to manage given how much Phantoms like to move.

Slow them down with Cryo Blast, or stun them with Disruptor Ammo or Electric Explosion combos if you can; they can't be allowed to get close or stay close for very long. Shredder and armor-piercing mods are also viable tools against a Phantom, as a lucky shot can pierce through them and shatter their sword.

Atlas



Armament: Homing missile launcher, heavy cannon, antipersonnel claw

Threat Level: High

Atlases are powerful heavy mechs that are resistant to almost all forms of damage to one degree or another. Once an Atlas drops onto the field, your priorities must switch accordingly. Fortunately, Atlases are quite slow, making it easy to line up everything you have.

Atlases have two large vulnerabilities to exploit: the thruster mounts on the back of the unit and the cockpit canopy. Ambushing an Atlas from behind is a sure way to cause heavy damage before it turns its attention to you, but if you're clever, you'll have squadmates on the other side, exploiting that same weakness.

The canopy glass can actually be shattered with enough concentrated fire, exposing the pilot to direct damage. Killing the pilot leaves the unit open for hijacking, and on higher difficulties this is one of the best ways to deal with an Atlas and its reinforcements.

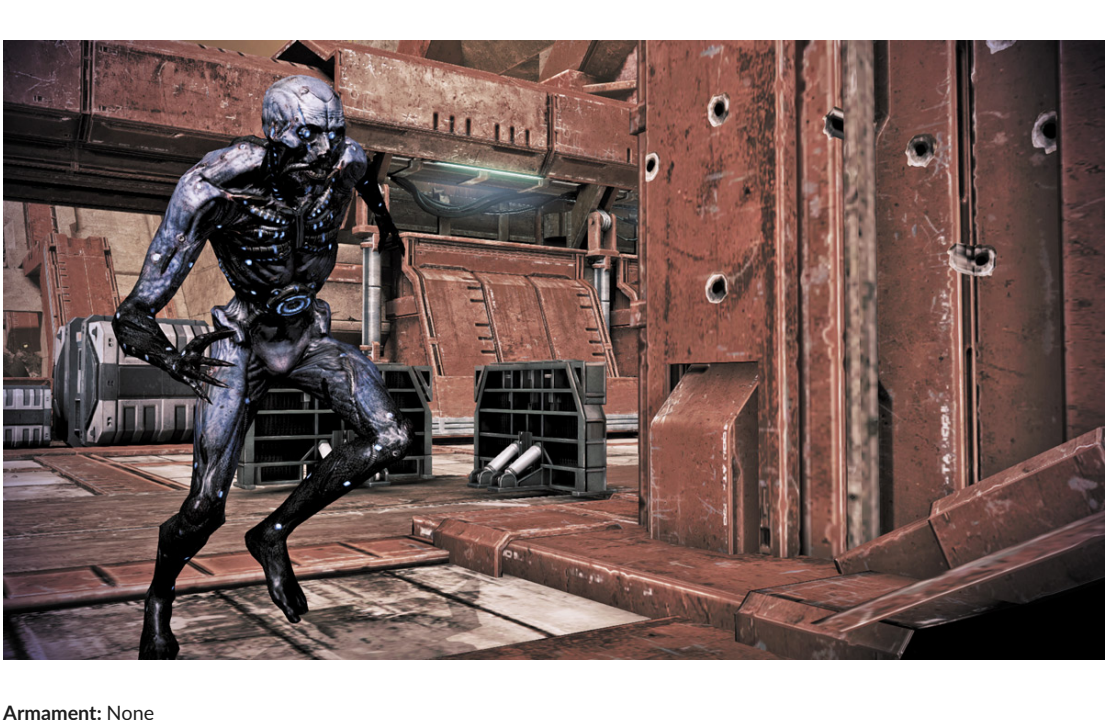
THE REAPERS

The Reapers aren't merely the collective consciousness found within each of their enormous cruisers and dreadnoughts that are pounding the fight out of every planet they've attacked.

Every race they've struck has had members harvested, indoctrinated, and "improved" through Reaper technology.

Without mercy, and barely any sense of self-preservation, Reaper ground forces consume the best a species has to offer and turn it against them.

Husk



Armament: None

Threat Level: Low to medium

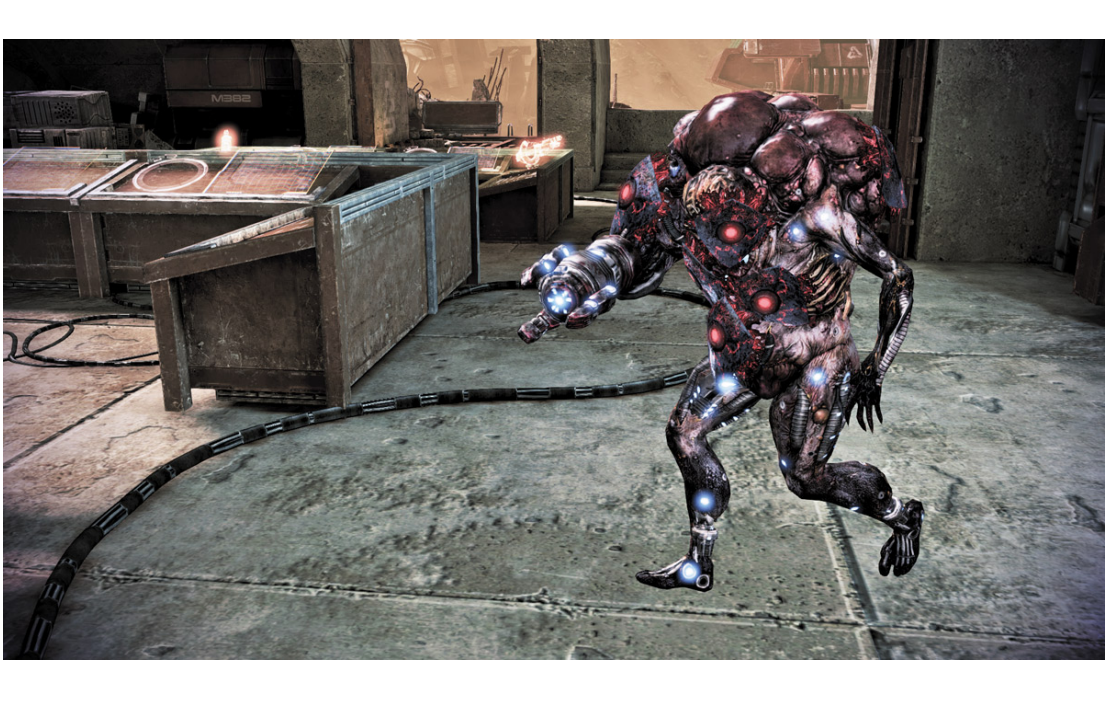
Former humans, Husks were originally believed to be a geth creation intended to intimidate humanoid species in battle, but it is now apparent that the Reapers produce Husks as basic ground troops.

Husks can be harmful in melee combat but are otherwise not very dangerous alone or even in small groups.

What truly makes them threatening is their ability to engage players in a melee hold that leaves them open to attack from any direction.

Deal with Husks quickly, as they are a distraction to more dangerous units. Incendiary powers and Biotics are especially effective at stopping their mindless rushes.

Cannibal



Armament: Arm cannons grafted onto their flesh

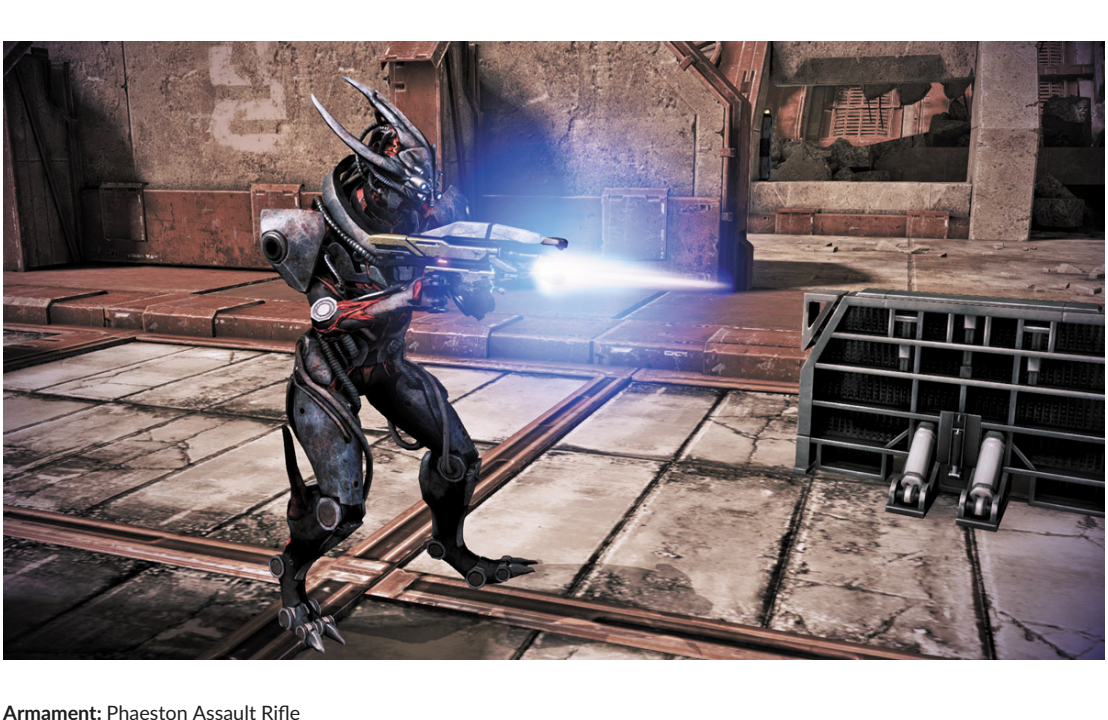
Threat Level: Medium

The fate of batarians who fell before the early waves of the Reaper invasion, Cannibals are fairly proficient in close- and medium-range combat. They can absorb a surprising amount of damage before going down. They become more dangerous as their allies fall around them.

Cannibals absorb the corpses of fallen enemies and allies alike, gaining a chitinous layer of armor that serves to further increase their resilience. Don't let Cannibals get free meals—make them pay for remaining stationary long enough to consume a corpse.

If one is armored, it is possible to freeze or incinerate the new armor layer and make them more vulnerable to incoming fire.

Marauder



Armament: Phaeston Assault Rifle

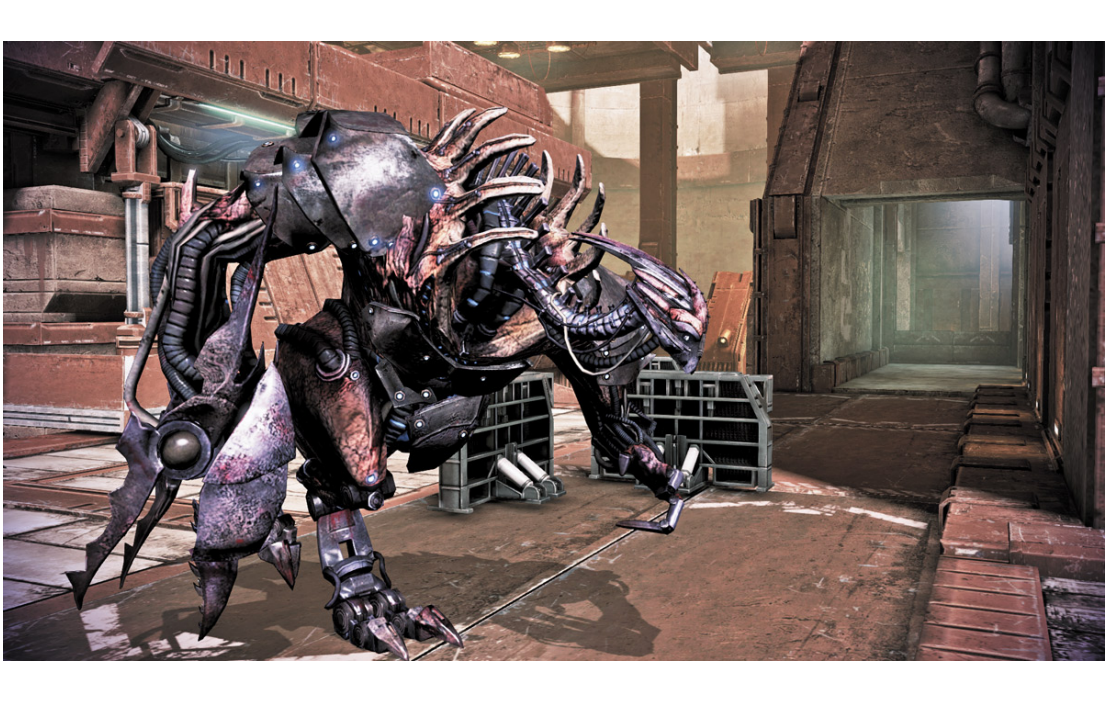
Threat Level: Medium-High

Marauders are turians that have fallen during the assault on their homeworld Palaven. They are similar to the Cerberus Centurion, being more resistant to incoming fire thanks to their shields and being more dangerous at range due to their accurate assault rifles.

Marauders serve as the combat support unit for Husks and Cannibals, having a unique ability to improve those units from a distance, forcing them to grow additional armor layers for protection.

While doing this, a Marauder is very vulnerable, so line up some headshots or close the distance and use heavy melee if it's safe. You want to burn them down before they enhance too many Husks or Cannibals.

Brute



Armament: Grafted arm blades, super-strength

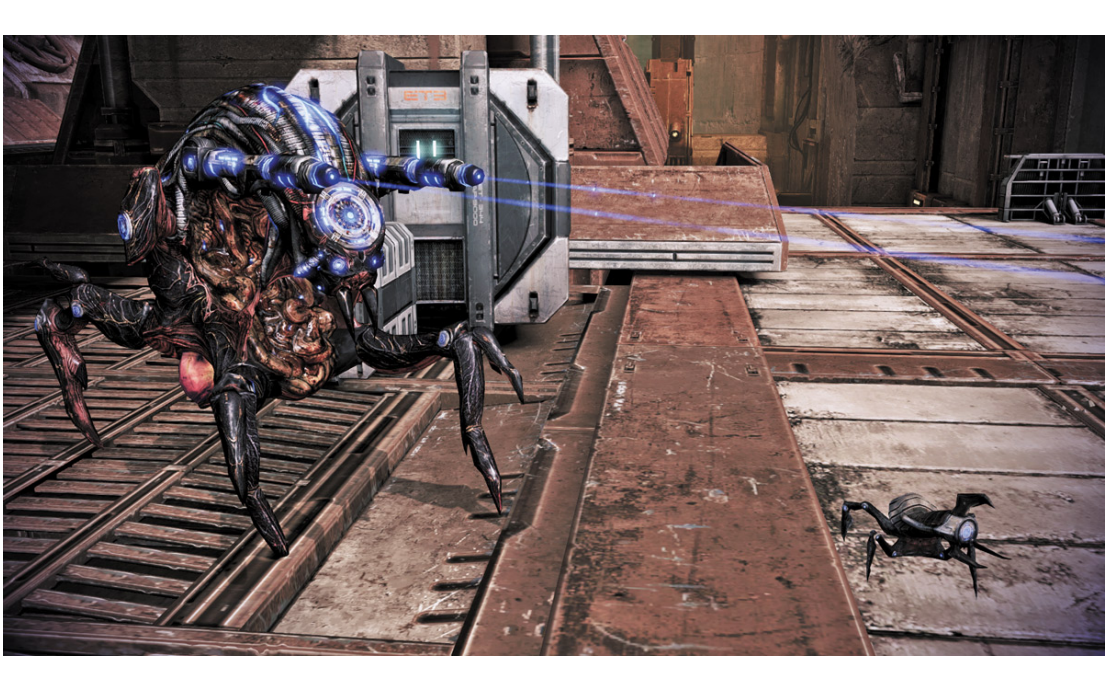
Threat Level: High

A hybrid of turian intelligence and krogan physical strength, Brutes are fast, strong, and smart enough to know how best to use these gifts. Thickly armored, Brutes can bound through walls of fire and survive to take huge swipes at players with their arms.

Be especially careful at close range with a Brute, as they can grab careless players and kill them in a single stab through the gut! Your best bet is to use their incredible speed against them, dodging out of the way of their charges, and lighting them up with any armor-breaking powers at your disposal.

Sniper rifles are also good for hitting their weak spot—the turian head grafted onto the torso. However, it will take some skill to hit that target while a Brute is on the move.

Ravager and Swarmer



Armament: Heavy Cannons

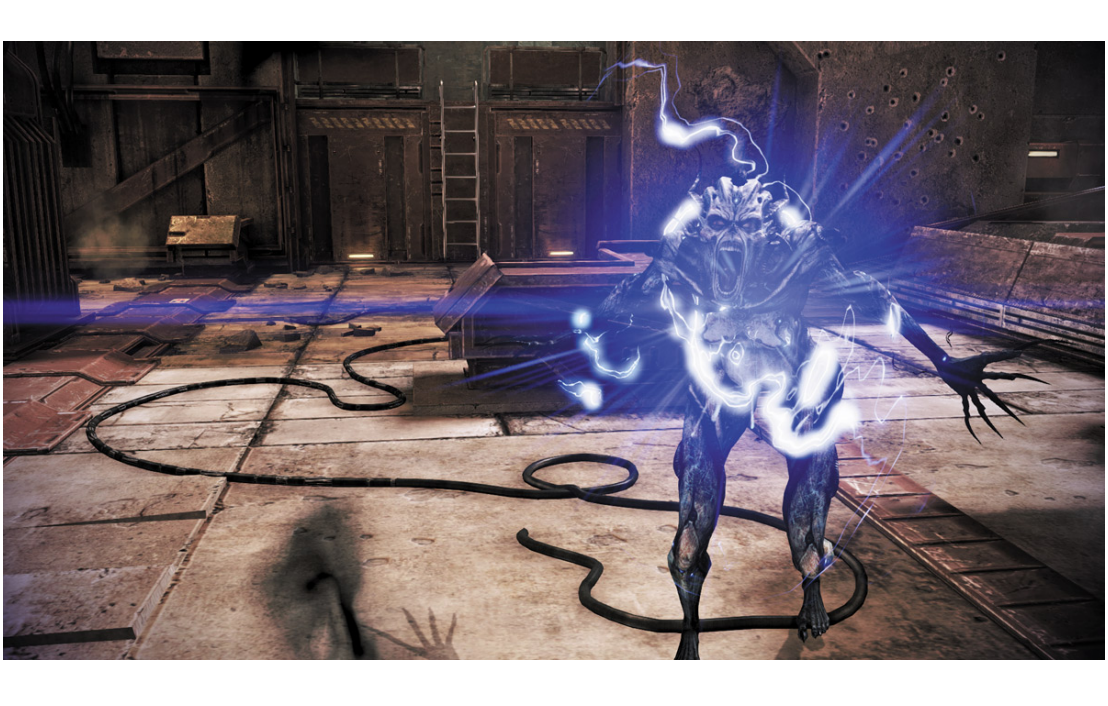
Threat Level: Medium to high

Ravagers present two major threats to players. The first is their high-powered cannon shots, which are accurate and have decent area of effect. At range, a Ravager is more than capable of melting shields and barriers and tearing apart what lies beneath.

Once you see the blue laser sights of a Ravager fall onto your character, find cover or pay the consequences. The other threat Ravagers provide come in the form of Swarmers, buglike enemies that are carried in the sacs of flesh hanging from the Ravagers. Once these burst open, the bugs streak toward any nearby victims.

While not especially dangerous by themselves, Swarmers do prevent shields and health from regenerating. Combine this with everything else the Reapers are throwing your way, and you can find yourself dead very fast.

Banshee



Armament: Biotics

Threat Level: High

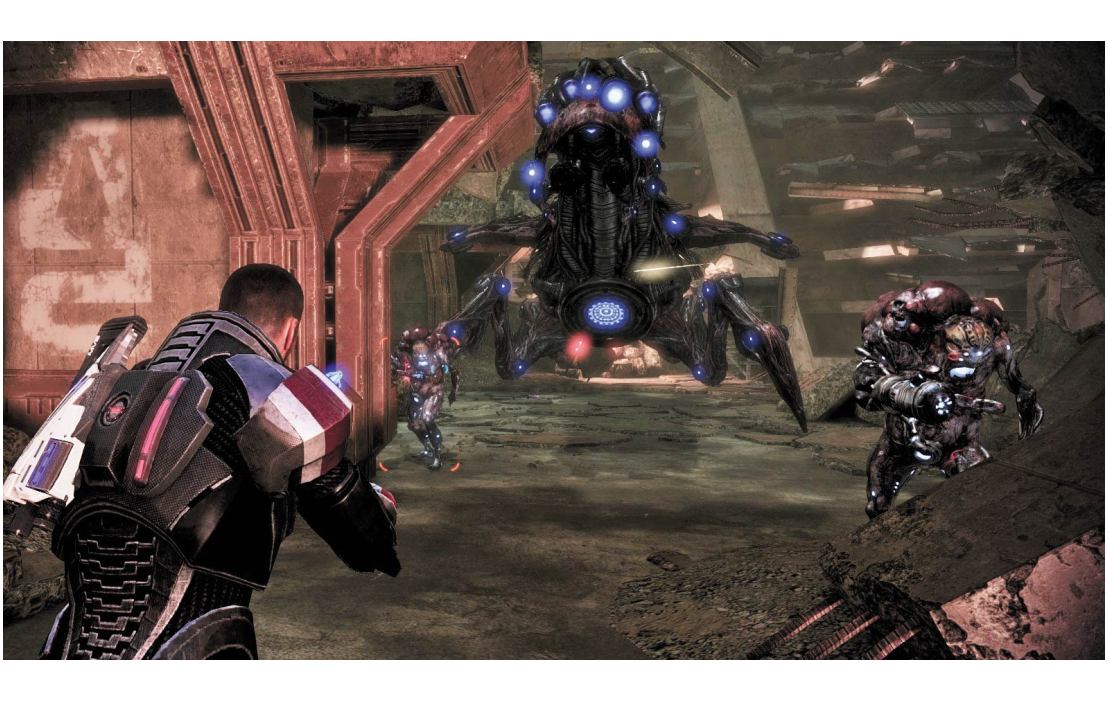
Probably one of the scarier units the Reapers possess, Banshees are the unfortunate husks of defeated asari known as Ardat-Yakshi, living up to their namesake with ear-piercing howls.

They possess immense Biotic power, their barrier being some of the strongest defenses in the game, even against attacks meant to defeat Biotic barriers.

Banshees seem slow at first as they hover toward you, but they suddenly close the gap with lightning-fast Biotic dashes that have them dancing through incoming fire and into melee range. Do not let them get so close, as they can finish Shepard or any squadmate in a single melee strike.

It is possible to save a squadmate caught in this lethal attack by causing enough damage to the Banshee, forcing them to drop their victim. Banshees are not limited to close-range combat. The Biotic blasts they fling can rapidly drain shields and prevent health from regenerating.

Harvester



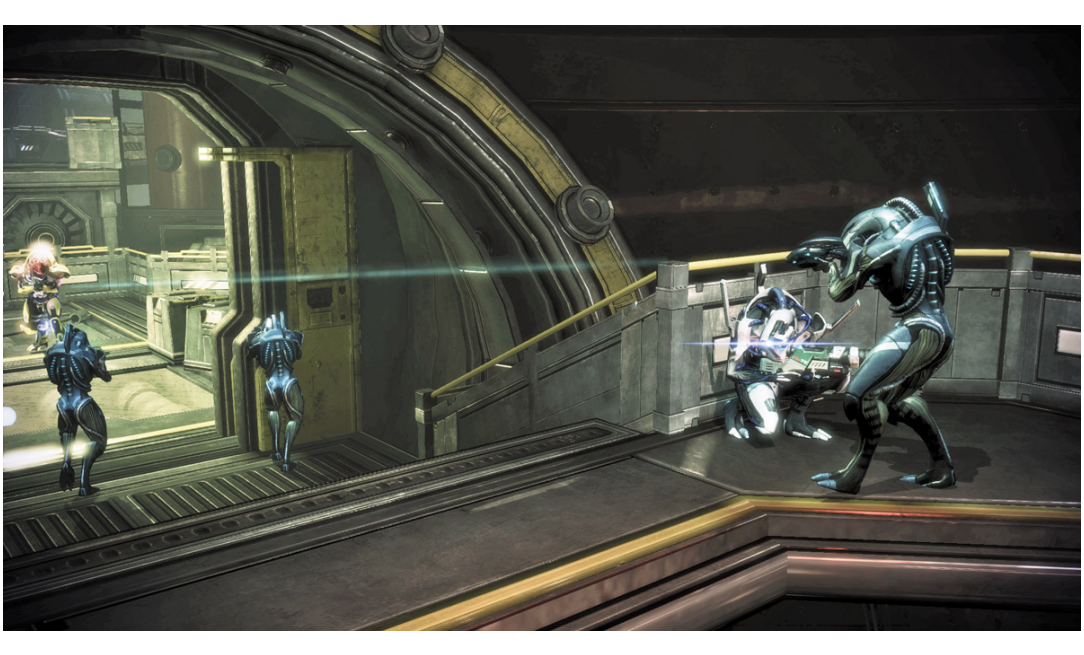
Armament: Heavy cannons grafted to their heads

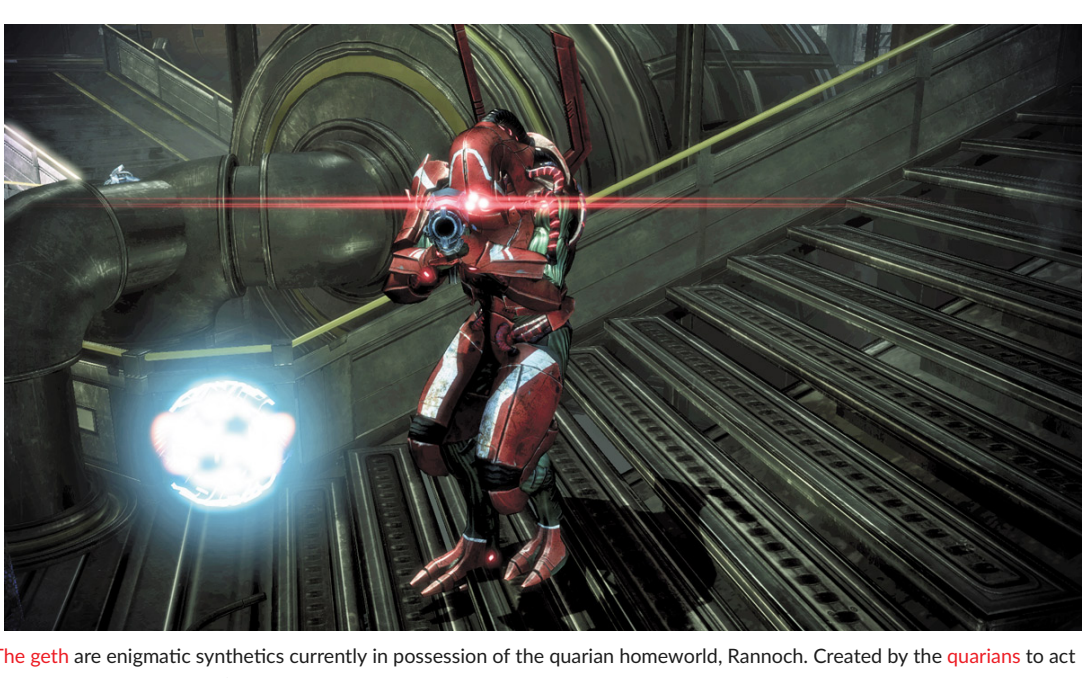
Threat Level: Low to medium

Like dragons, Harvesters sweep through the skies in search of victims to take back to Reaper processing centers. These monsters are not regularly occurring enemies throughout the main story, but they do show up during certain events.

The gravest threat they present comes from the cargo they carry. Whenever a Harvester appears, drive it away or destroy it quickly by exploiting its weakness to anti-armor powers, lest they unload their troops into the fight.

THE GETH



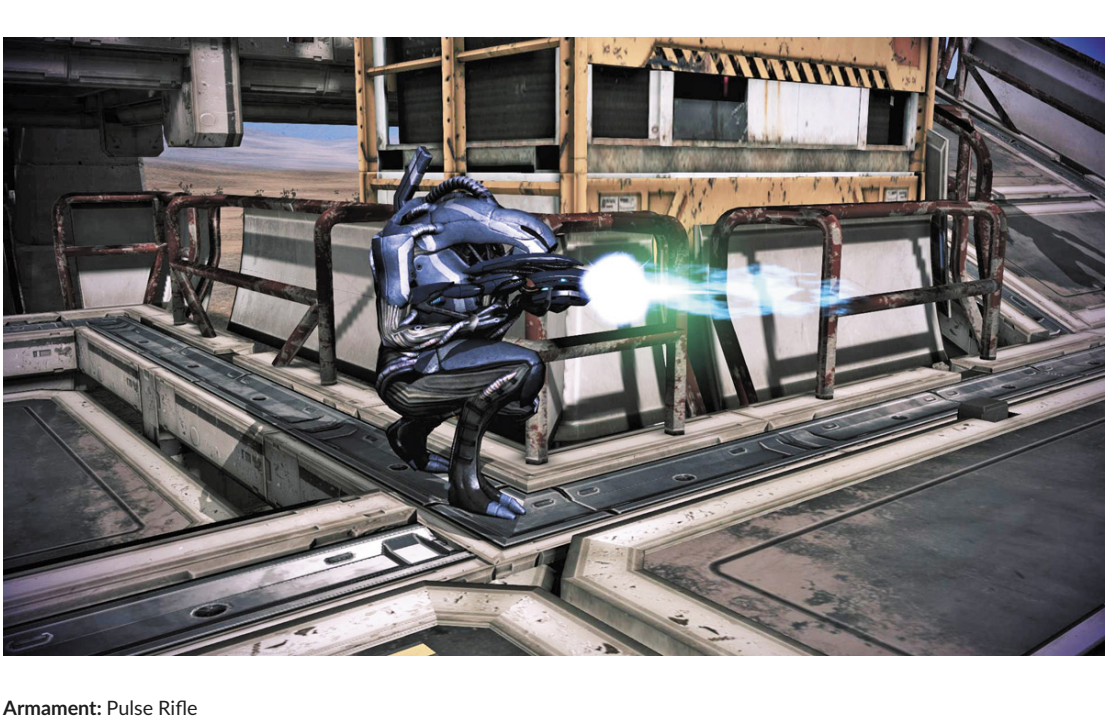


The geth are enigmatic synthetics currently in possession of the quarian homeworld, Rannoch. Created by the quarians to act as their servants, the geths' eventual rise as a collective intelligence came as a surprise to their creators, who tried to destroy them preemptively, only to fail.

It has come to light that the geth that once served the Reaper Sovereign have been considered "heretics" by another faction of geth. Despite this split in their collective structure, the geth are not conflicted when it comes to defending themselves from organic hostility.

While not as dynamic compared to the Reaper or Cerberus forces, the geth make up for it with brutal precision and efficiency in combat.

Geth Trooper



Armament: Pulse Rifle

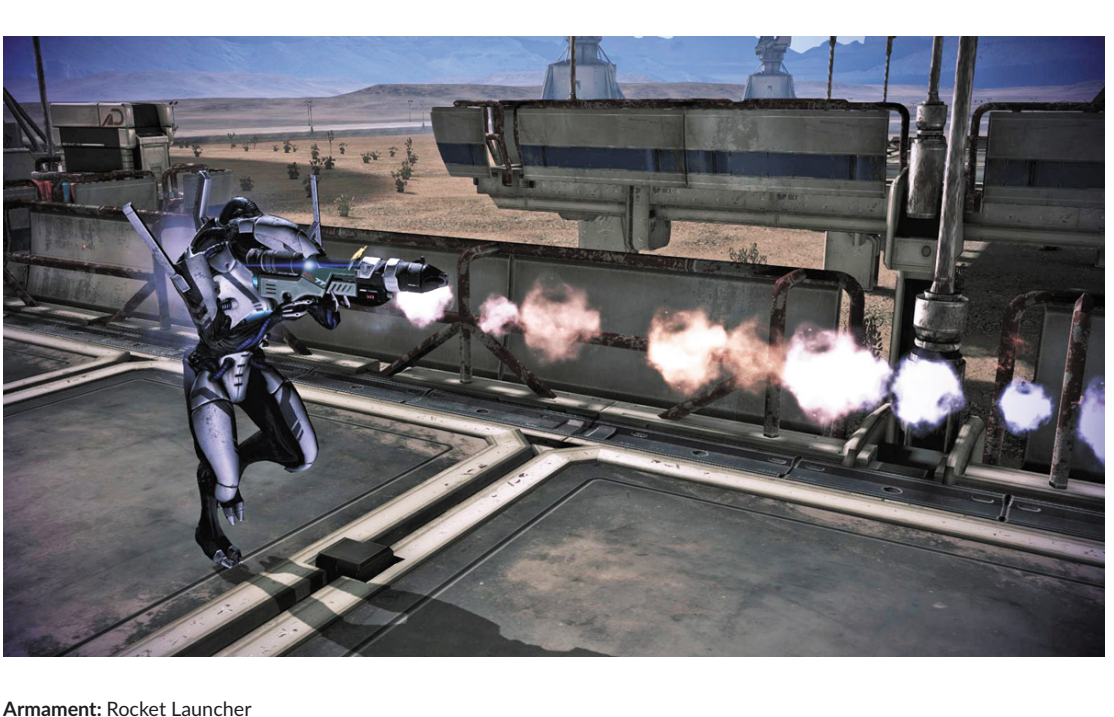
Threat Level: Low to medium

A lone Geth Trooper is not particularly dangerous. It is slow to move, has a large head vulnerable to sniper rifles, and lacks any form of protective shielding, so a Trooper can be fodder for any class.

However, when encountered in groups, you will find that Troopers focus their fire on single targets with great accuracy, able to burn down an unprotected victim in seconds.

Techs such as Overload or Sabotage work very well against Troopers, allowing you to disrupt their advances with ease.

Geth Rocket Trooper



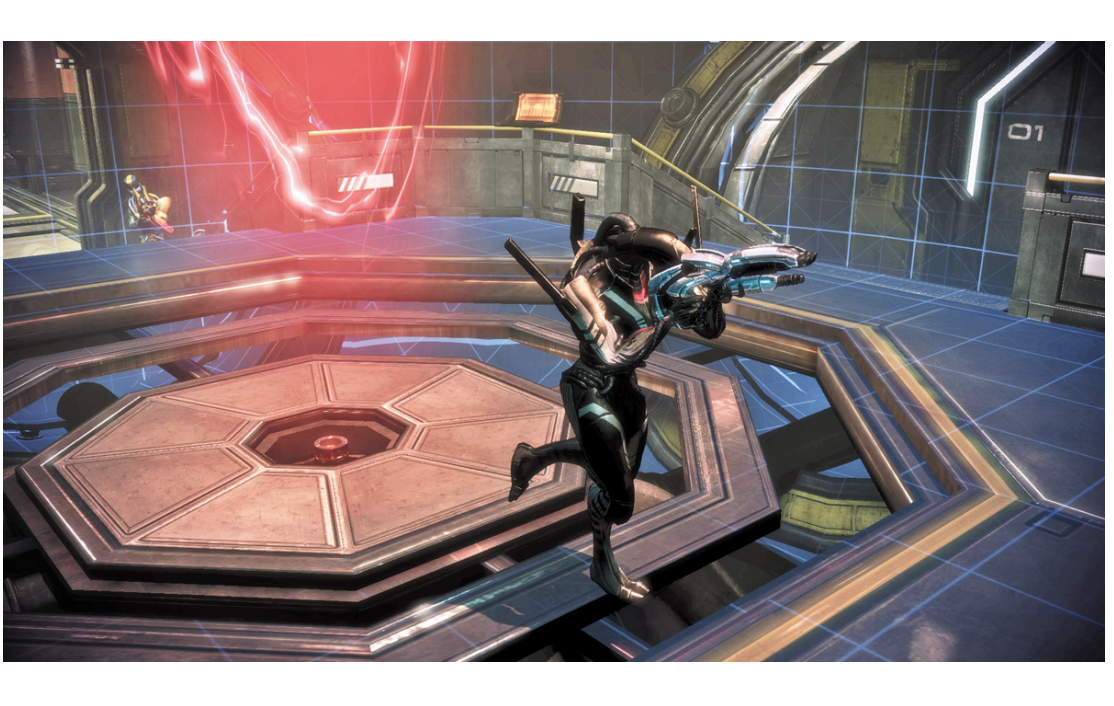
Armament: Rocket Launcher

Threat Level: Medium

A step up from the Trooper platform, Geth Rocket Troopers provide heavy fire support for other geth platforms. The homing rockets they fire are difficult to evade and can blast players out of cover and expose them to other assaults.

On higher combat difficulties, Rocket Troopers can fully strip away shielding or bring a player to critical health in one shot, so keep an eye out for the projectiles streaking toward you and find good protection.

Geth Hunter



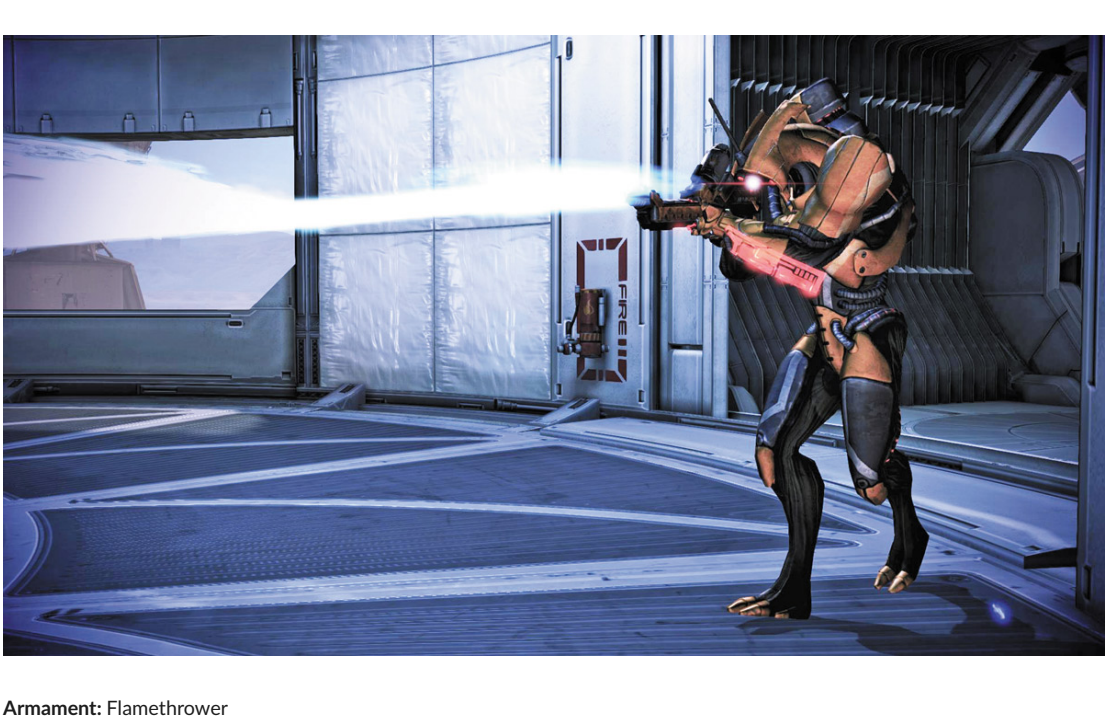
Armament: Plasma Shotgun, tactical cloak

Threat Level: Medium to high

Using their cloaks to get close to their selected targets, Geth Hunters can do astounding levels of damage with one charged shot from their plasma shotguns. In the heat of battle, it's easy to miss cloaked Hunters among the visual clutter until it's almost too late to react.

If you suspect Hunters are near, use area-of-effect abilities to break their cloak. Being shielded makes Hunters tough targets, so bring Disruptor Ammo or characters with Overload to help deal with them. Unchecked, Hunter teams can be murderous.

Geth Pyro



Armament: Flamethrower

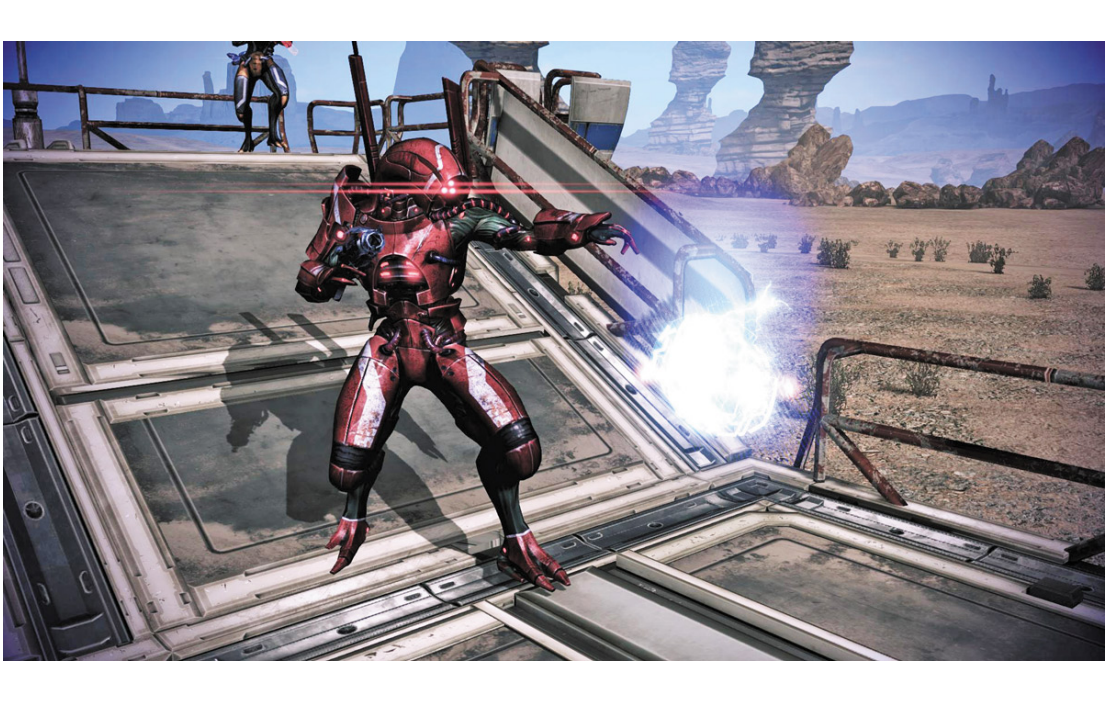
Threat Level: Medium

Boasting a layer of shielding and an armor layer, the Geth Pyro can be a close-quarters powerhouse. Its flamethrowers can bypass low cover, shields, armor, and barriers with equal ease.

If you see a Pyro closing in, focus everyone's attention on it, particularly on higher difficulties where you simply will not survive a sustained burst from their weapons.

Fortunately, Pyros have one very glaring weakness: the fuel tanks on their backs. A use of Overload or a well-aimed shot from a high-powered gun can puncture the tank and lead to a devastating explosion that can heavily damage or kill nearby geth.

Geth Prime



Armament: Plasma Cannons, combat drones, defense turrets

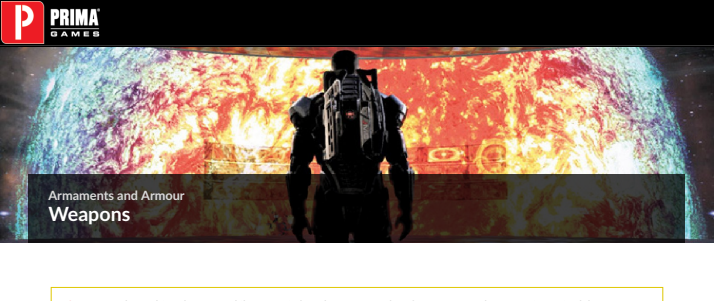
Threat Level: High

While slower than the other geth, the Prime platforms are powerhouses, able to wade through heavy fire while delivering punishing barrages.

The heavy plasma cannons a Prime is armed with are bad enough, but their ability to deploy combat drones and defense turrets turn a Prime into a one-geth flanking machine.

It is not surprising to see turrets deployed behind Shepard in order to bypass any hard cover, while the Prime continues to march forward, laying down plasma fire and sending its combat drone out to harass the Spectre.

The dual layers of shields and armor protection makes taking down a Prime a tough prospect. It's best to keep them at a healthy distance, if only to give yourself a chance to better react to incoming fire.



Armaments and Armour

Weapons

The Reapers have ships almost two kilometers in length or greater, dwarfing most vessels of any given Citadel race.

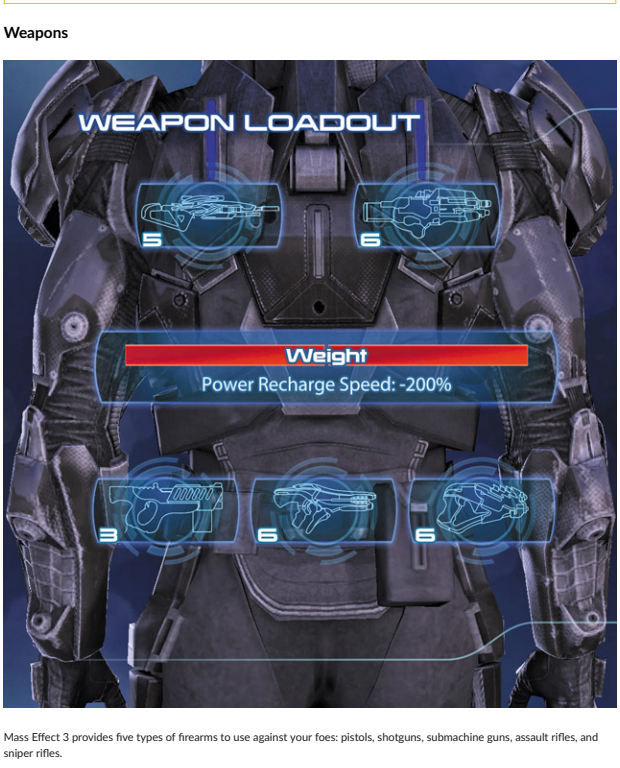
They land on planets by the dozens, scorching whole swaths of land with their powerful weapons, crushing underfoot anything that dares to stand against them.

They send armies of indoctrinated, Reaperized soldiers to overwhelm the meager number of defenders that remain after such an onslaught.

Cerberus, with its virtually unlimited resources, has some of the best technology mankind can offer and turns it willingly on fellow man and alien without mercy.

In light of recent events, even the geth are a resurgent force in the galaxy. You need firepower of your own to even begin stopping them all, and armor to survive the inevitable pounding you will receive.

Weapons



Mass Effect 3 provides five types of firearms to use against your foes: pistols, shotguns, submachine guns, assault rifles, and sniper rifles.

In previous games, Shepard's effectiveness with guns depended largely on what class you chose to play as.

In Mass Effect 3, there are no restrictions regarding what types of guns Shepard can take into combat. If you want to bring a sniper rifle and a shotgun as a Vanguard, go for it.

It is totally possible to run through the entire game with the weapons you are comfortable with.

There is one major factor to consider when selecting your weapons, and that is their weight. Weight directly influences the cooldown times of all the powers Shepard has.

Taking all the heaviest firepower you can muster can increase power cooldowns by up to 200 percent!

On the other side of the spectrum, taking a light loadout can significantly speed up power cooldowns, an excellent bonus for classes and character builds that reward rapid power usage.

Certain passive skills can decrease the weight of a gun or increase total carrying capacity.

Submachine guns have a special mod that can reduce their weight significantly, making room for heavier weapons in a loadout.

Weapons can be upgraded a maximum of five times on a first playthrough in single-player. In successive playthroughs, the limit is raised to 10.

These upgrades can be purchased from the Normandy's Shuttle Bay. Multiplayer weapon upgrades max out at 10, with no prior restrictions.

Most weapons you unlock in single-player mode will be found during missions. Once Shepard is reinstated as a Spectre, you'll be able to buy three very special Spectre-issue weapons...at a steep price.

In multiplayer, guns and their upgrades work similarly, though they come fairly randomly through purchases of special reinforcement packs.

Characters in multiplayer are also limited to two guns. See the "Multiplayer" section for more details.

Pistols

Pistols are your most basic firearm, specializing primarily in short- to mid-ranged combat.

They range from rapid-fire semiautomatics to hand cannons with heavy recoil and high damage.

In spite of their size, pistols make remarkably solid backup weapons due to their typically light weight.

Pistols are faster on the draw than other weapons, making them excellent to switch to if a primary weapon is out of thermal clips.

Of special note is the Scorpion pistol, which fires small explosives that adhere to hostiles, with a slight delay before detonation.

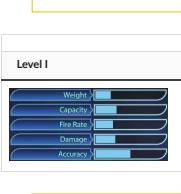
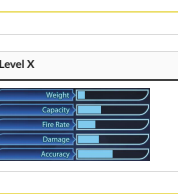
Melee combat with pistols can be surprisingly effective, as there are mods that add a shock effect to each swing of the weapon, stunning unprotected targets.

M-5 Phalanx

Availability: Found during "Priority: Tuchanka" (Cure the Genophage)

The M-5 Phalanx is the product of the Alliance's Offensive Handgun Project, a close-range weapon with no loss of stopping power in comparison with a soldier's assault rifle.

The Phalanx enjoys a ballistics advantage over most heavy pistols. Civilian variants are often purchased by colonists on planets that have dangerous big-game animals.

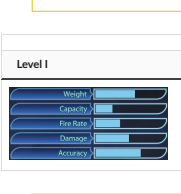
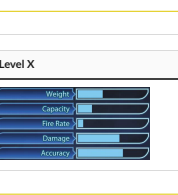
Level I	Level X
	

M-358 Talon

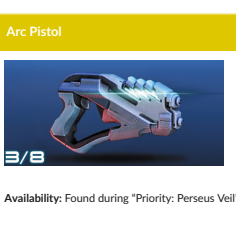
Availability: Found during "Priority: Citadel" (Visit the Citadel)

The Talon is a close-range pistol favored by Cerberus Guardians. Firing heavy-gauge shotgun pellets, it delivers massive trauma to unarmored targets.

Its waste heat is so excessive that it carries six separate ammunition blocks, rotating like a 20th-century revolver to prevent shaver jam or misfire due to premature melting of the shot.

Level I	Level X
	

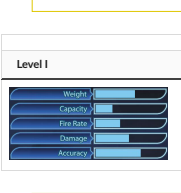
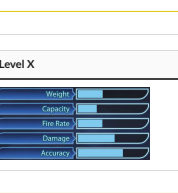
Arc Pistol



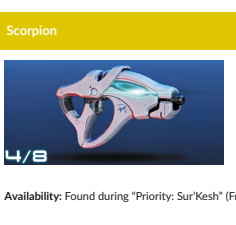
Availability: Found during "Priority: Perseus Veil" (Disable the Dreadnought)

An innovation of Admiral Daro'Xen, the Arc Pistol is a scaled-down Arc Projector that requires only thermal clips to solve its power problems.

The Arc Pistol uses a invisible laser to ionize the air and create a path for a high-ampere electric shock. For a more damaging blast, it can be charged up.

Level I	Level X
	

Scorpion

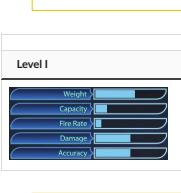
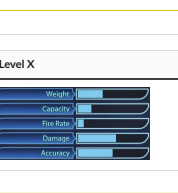


Availability: Found during "Priority: Sur'Kesh" (Free the Krogan Females)

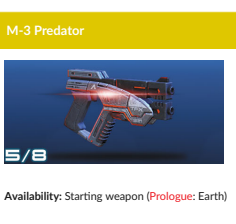
Originally issued to the salarian Special Tasks Group to allow small units to get much larger enemy forces under control, the Scorpion pistol now sees service galaxy-wide.

It fires low-velocity, squash-head projectiles with a dual use. The high-explosive filler within the projectiles contains an adhesive that secures the projectile to the target on impact.

When fired into a surface, it turns into a proximity mine.

Level I	Level X
	

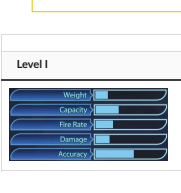
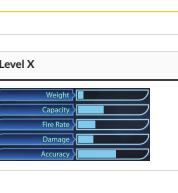
M-3 Predator



Availability: Starting weapon (Prologue: Earth)

A reliable, accurate sidearm manufactured by Elanus Risk Control. The Predator is valued as a powerful, deadly, and relatively inexpensive weapon.

While it is not generally deployed in the military, it's still very popular in the Terminus Systems.

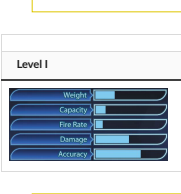
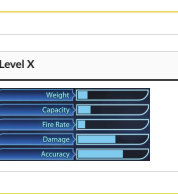
Level I	Level X
	

M-77 Paladin

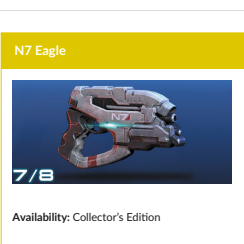
Availability: Spectre Requisitions

The Paladin is a reliable, durable weapon developed by law enforcement looking for a high-powered but easily concealed sidearm for undercover agents.

Surprisingly small for its hitting power, the Paladin is a variant on the Carnifex pistol. While it has a smaller clip than the Carnifex, its shots are unquestionably more powerful.

Level I	Level X
	

N7 Eagle

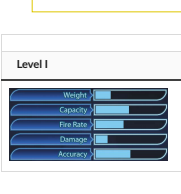
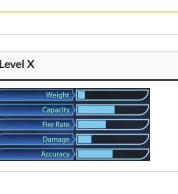


Availability: Collector's Edition

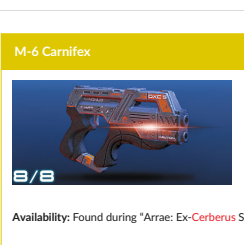
When the Alliance's Offensive Handgun Project received funding to update one of its designs, its engineers chose to redesign the already impressive Phalanx pistol.

Like its predecessor, the Eagle is a compact, fully automatic pistol that delivers unprecedented accuracy and punch with a rapid firing rate.

The Eagle is named after the Desert Eagle, a classic handgun that gained a romantic reputation among gun collectors, thanks to its popularity in 20th- and 21st-century Earth action movies.

Level I	Level X
	

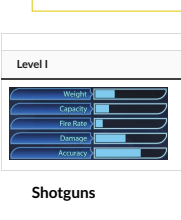
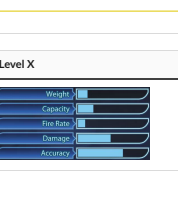
M-6 Carnifex



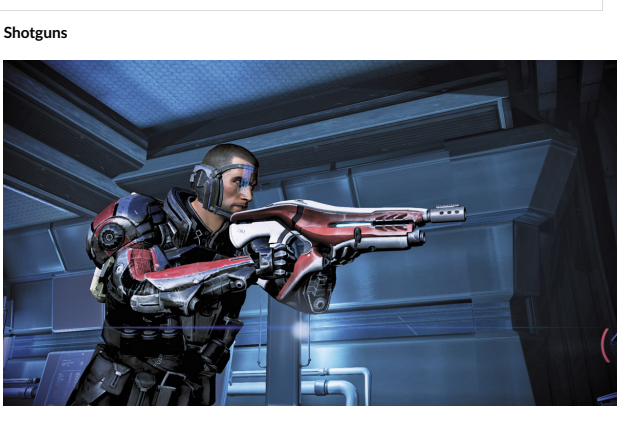
Availability: Found during "Arrae: Ex-Cerberus Scientists"

A highly accurate and lethal pistol, the Carnifex is a favored sidearm of mercenary leaders and Eclipse mercenary tech specialists.

This is an expensive and powerful weapon, and its marketing materials feature a charging krogan with the slogan "Don't you wish Carnifex was at your side?"

Level I	Level X
	

Shotguns



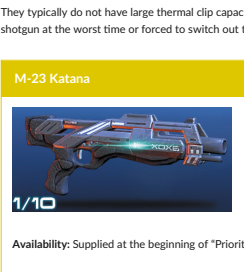
Providing one of the most powerful close-ranged punches in the game, shotguns are the answer to almost anything that gets too close to you.

Precision is not what these weapons are known for. Combined with an aggressive player and a resilient class build, it's possible to be nearly unbeatable at close range.

Unfortunately, there are serious drawbacks to these weapons.

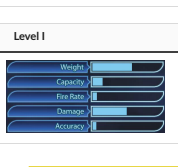
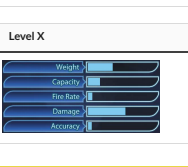
They typically do not have large thermal clip capacities, and this can lead to situations where you're stuck trying to reload the shotgun at the worst time or forced to switch out to a new weapon.

M-23 Katana



Availability: Supplied at the beginning of "Priority: Mars" (First Chance for Hope)

Manufactured by Ariake Technologies, the Katana is a common mercenary weapon and is also popular on colonies with varren infestations. It's deadly at short range but ineffective at long range.

Level I	Level X
	

Geth Plasma Shotgun

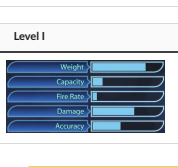
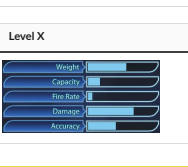
Availability: Found during "Priority: Rannoch" (Reaper Base)

This three-barreled geth weapon fires miniature but potent cluster rounds of superconducting projectiles and has a longer range than standard shotguns.

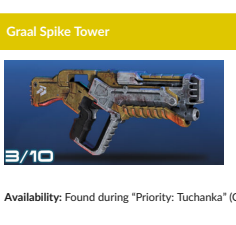
A two-stage trigger system allows for either quick-fire capacitors or a charge-and-release attack to electrify the projectiles as they exit the weapon.

As the rounds hit the target, they fragment and electricity arcs between the pieces, flash converting the air to conductive plasma.

The resulting impact, heat, and electrical charge overloads shields and causes massive trauma to unarmored targets.

Level I	Level X
	

Graal Spike Thrower



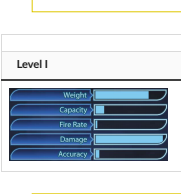
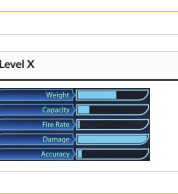
Availability: Found during "Priority: Tuchanka" (Cure the Genophage)

The Graal is one of a long line of krogan weapons used to hunt thresher maws.

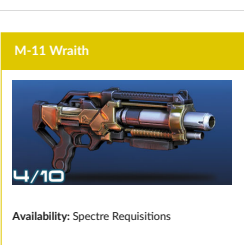
Its ammunition consists of oversized flechettes meant to pierce thresher hide and create deep wound channels that lead to massive blood loss.

For additional firepower, the weapon is double-barreled and, as a last resort, possesses blades to cause internal injuries if the wielder is swallowed by the thresher.

Using a Graal on a humanoid target has predictably grisly effects. Its shots can be charged for more damage.

Level I	Level X
	

M-11 Wraith

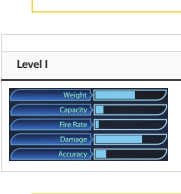
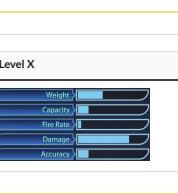


Availability: Spectre Requisitions

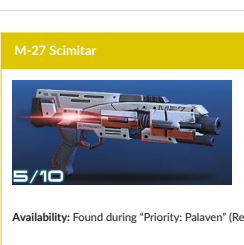
The Wraith is favored among mercenaries, pirates, and slavers in the Terminus systems. Its high-impact damage and sturdy construction make it a popular "quick-draw" shotgun.

A variant of the M-22 Eviscerator, the Wraith is in high demand, even though the weapon is banned in Citadel space.

In order to lighten its weight, the Wraith holds fewer shots than the Eviscerator.

Level I	Level X
	

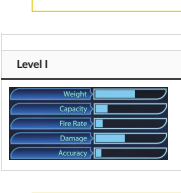
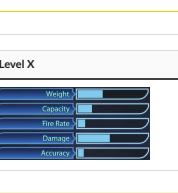
M-27 Scimitar



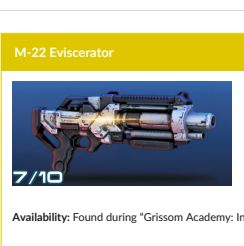
Availability: Found during "Priority: Palaven" (Rescue the Turian Primarch)

Manufactured by Ariake Technologies, the Scimitar features twin mass effect generators, giving it a more rapid rate of fire than a traditional shotgun.

This weapon was created for the Eclipse mercenary band but is rapidly becoming popular with Blood Pack mercs as well.

Level I	Level X
	

M-22 Eviscerator



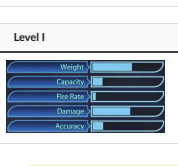
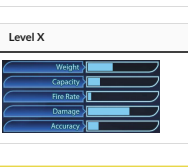
Availability: Found during "Grissom Academy: Investigation" (Grissom Academy: Investigation)

The Lieberschaft 2180 shotgun, or "Eviscerator," is of human civilian design and has a unique ammunition generator.

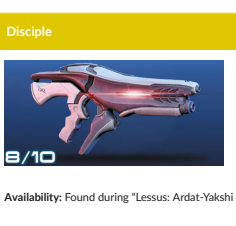
Where most modern firearms slice ships or pellets from an ammunition block, the M-22 shaves off serrated metal wedges designed to fly aerodynamically.

This dramatically improves its armor-piercing capabilities, and its tight grouping ensures lethality at longer ranges than standard shotguns.

This design violates several intergalactic weapons treaties, so the M-22 is not distributed to militaries.

Level I	Level X
	

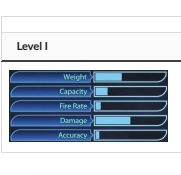
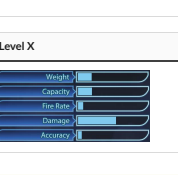
Disciple



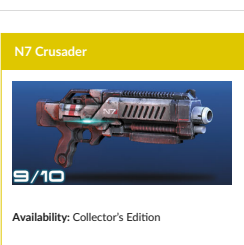
Availability: Found during "Lesuss: Ardat-Yakshi Monastery"

Originally handcrafted for the exclusive use of Justicars, the Disciple shotgun's schematics were finally released to asari commandos after centuries of negotiation.

The Disciple uses shells packed with micro-scale submunitions to deal staggering amounts of damage. Even shielded enemies are stunned by the force of a blast from this weapon.

Level I	Level X
	

N7 Crusader

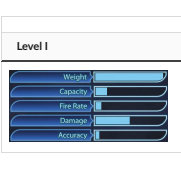
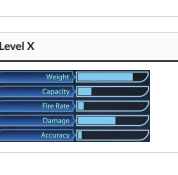


Availability: Collector's Edition

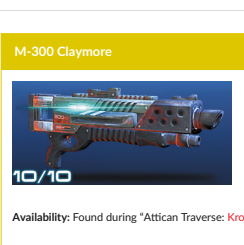
Bruised and bloody Alliance marines on Torfan attributed their survival against waves of batarian mercenaries to the precision and stopping power of the Crusader.

With a design patterned on riot shotguns, this weapon has a moderate rate of fire that rewards careful aiming.

Since this accuracy requires little room for error, the Crusader is primarily used by highly trained soldiers.

Level I	Level X
	

M-300 Claymore

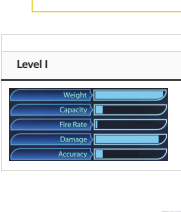
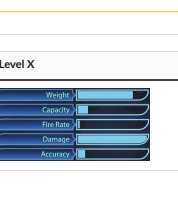


Availability: Found during "Attican Traverse: Krogan Team" (Investigate Missing Scouts)

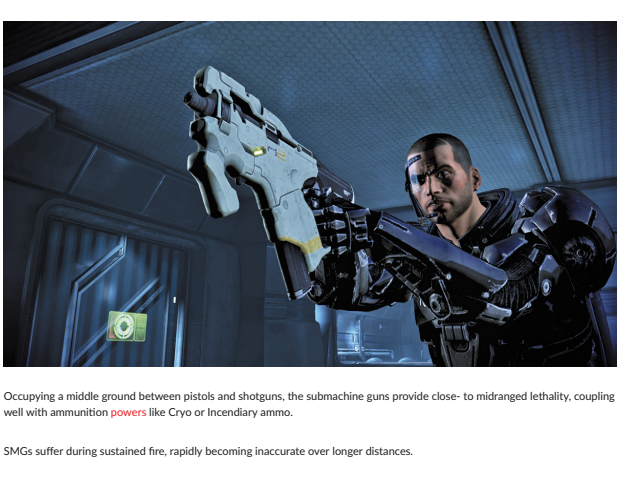
The Claymore used to be a hard-hitting but poor-selling shotgun due to kickback problems snapping the arms of anyone but a krogan firing the weapon.

After a rehaul of its kinetic dampening system, the Claymore is being rolled out again.

As a way to lure back customers, the gun's manufacturer has lowered the shotgun's selling price without skimping on its stopping power.

Level I	Level X
	

Submachine Guns



Occupying a middle ground between pistols and shotguns, the submachine guns provide close- to midranged lethality, coupling well with ammunition powers like Cryo or Incendiary ammo.

SMGs suffer during sustained fire, rapidly becoming inaccurate over longer distances.

However, SMGs can absolutely rip apart armor, making them solid choices once the shields and barriers of a target are stripped away.

Of all the weapon types, SMGs benefit the most from being combined with special ammunition, as their high rates of fire ensure that the effects of each ammo type "stick" much sooner.

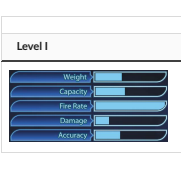
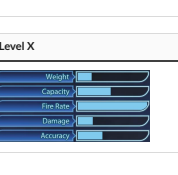
It's not uncommon to see an SMG kitted out for reduced weight alongside heavier guns within a player's arsenal.

M-25 Hornet

Availability: Found during "Priority: Citadel" (Visit the Citadel)

The Hornet is a long-range submachine gun created by Cerberus. It is standard equipment for Cerberus troops, who are trained to handle the recoil from the gun's three-round bursts.

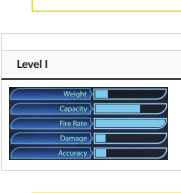
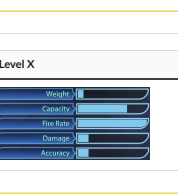
Cerberus designed the Hornet to conserve ammunition and provide cover fire during prolonged conflicts.

Level I	Level X
	

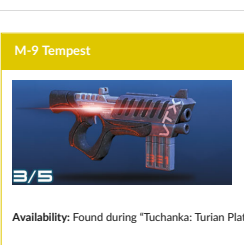
M-4 Shuriken

Availability: Found during "Priority: Mars" (First Chance for Hope)

As kinetic barriers have grown in popularity, so has the popularity of submachine guns. Manufactured by the Elkoss Combine, the Shuriken Machine Pistol fires six-round bursts with a high rate of fire.

Level I	Level X
	

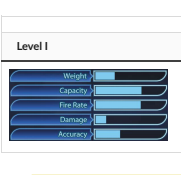
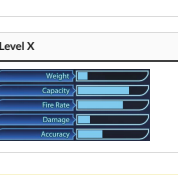
M-9 Tempest



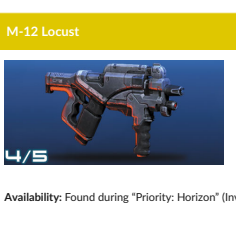
Availability: Found during "Tuchanka: Turian Platoon" (Extract Turian Survivors)

Produced by Elanus Risk Control Services for the Eclipse mercenary band, the Tempest is an expensive but deadly addition to anyone's arsenal.

This fully automatic submachine gun is punishing up close but becomes less accurate at long range.

Level I	Level X
	

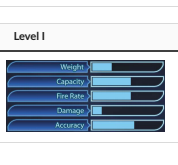
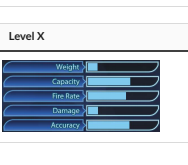
M-12 Locust



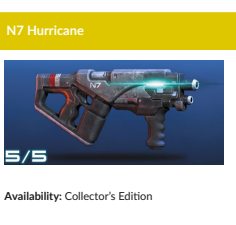
Availability: Found during "Priority: Horizon" (Investigate Sanctuary)

The Kassa Fabrications Model-12 Locust is a compact submachine gun developed for the Alliance but now favored by gang enforcers and hit men.

Featuring a complex recoil-reducing mechanism and high-grade auto-targeting software, the Locus delivers longer range and more accurate fire than others in its class.

Level I	Level X
	

N7 Hurricane

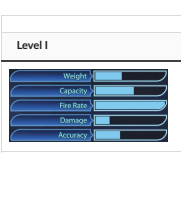
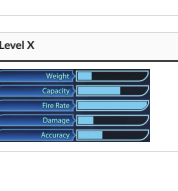


Availability: Collector's Edition

While some militaries pass on the Hurricane because of its lower accuracy, the Alliance feels the gun's rapid firing rate offers excellent suppressive fire.

A disciplined marksman can use the fully automatic submachine gun to chew through targets with alarming speed.

Alliance officers were so pleased with field results that the Hurricane is now many squadrons' standard-issue SMG.

Level I	Level X
	

Assault Rifles

The workhorse weapon of the game, the assault rifle can perform adequately at every range. These rifles enjoy decent rates of fire, good stopping power, and solid accuracy even at more extreme ranges.

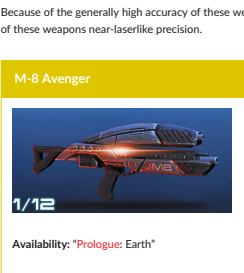
There's a lot of variety in the available ARs as well.

For example, the M-96 Mattock boasts good killing power, high accuracy, and semiautomatic capability that rewards players who can keep putting rounds into critical spots on a target, even while on the move.

Meanwhile, the starting M-8 Avenger provides full auto capability that remains surprisingly accurate even for longer bursts.

Because of the generally high accuracy of these weapons, adding a scope or stability mod is highly recommended, giving many of these weapons near-laserlike precision.

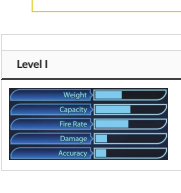
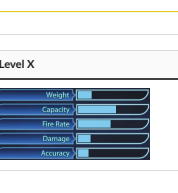
M-8 Avenger



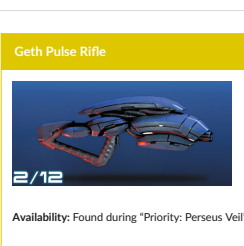
Availability: "Prologue: Earth"

The Avenger is a common, versatile, military-grade assault rifle manufactured by the Elkoss Combine. It's accurate when fired in short bursts, and deadly when fired on full auto.

The modular design and inexpensive components of the Avenger make it a favorite of military groups and mercenaries alike. The rifle has a reputation for being tough, reliable, easy to use, and easy to upgrade.

Level I	Level X
	

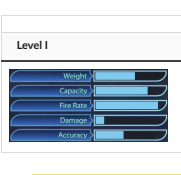
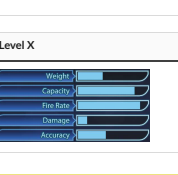
Geth Pulse Rifle



Availability: Found during "Priority: Perseus Veil" (Disable the Dreadnought)

Geth pulse rifles are comparable to a standard stock assault rifle but are finely balanced with low recoil and incredibly high accuracy.

The pulse rifle fires a rapid stream of lightweight slugs that are wrapped in a phasic envelope to increase their damage.

Level I	Level X
	

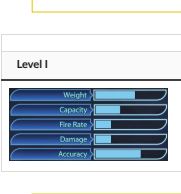
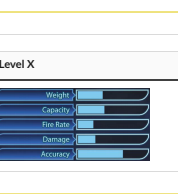
M-96 Mattock

Availability: Found during "Grissom Academy: Investigation" (N7: Cerberus Abductions)

A medium-range, semiautomatic rifle, the Mattock is a hybrid weapon with an assault rifle's low heat production and a sniper rifle's punch.

Marksmen favor its increased power over that of an assault rifle to bring down hardened targets.

Its lack of a full-auto setting is advertised as a feature rather than a shortcoming, as it curbs a soldier's tendency to spray inaccurate fire under stress.

Level I	Level X
	

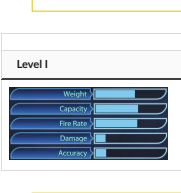
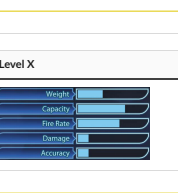
Phaeston

Availability: Found during "Tuchanka: Turian Platoon" (Extract Turian Survivors)

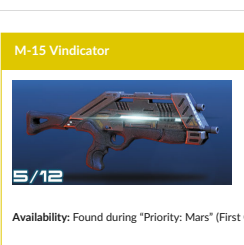
Named after a turian spirit of creation, the Phaeston was engineered to provide the best possible balance between accuracy and firepower in a machine gun.

Each shot is tempered by kickback dampeners inside the shoulder stock, which lets the Phaeston pack more punch than other weapons its size without sacrificing precision.

Its fully automatic fire and relatively light weight has turned the Phaeston into the turian infantry's primary go-to weapon.

Level I	Level X
	

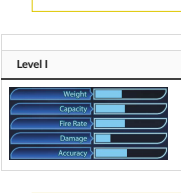
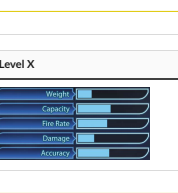
M-15 Vindicator



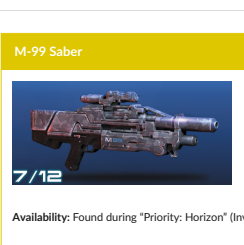
Availability: Found during "Priority: Mars" (First Chance for Hope)

A battle rifle that fires in three-round bursts, the Vindicator is favored by assassins and elite mercenaries and is deadly at any range.

Manufactured by Elanus Risk Control Services for the Blue Suns mercenary group, the Vindicator is popular in the Terminus systems.

Level I	Level X
	

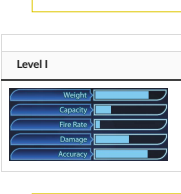
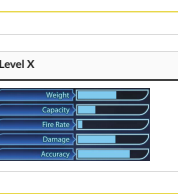
M-99 Saber



Availability: Found during "Priority: Horizon" (Investigate Sanctuary)

A heavy-duty semiautomatic rifle favored by only the most elite marksman, the M-99 Saber is jokingly referred to as "the Big Iron" for its sheer stopping power.

Each M-99 Saber is designed specifically for its owner, making it one of the Alliance's more expensive weapons.

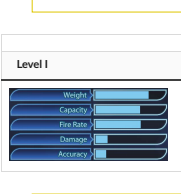
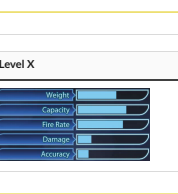
Level I	Level X
	

M-76 Revenant

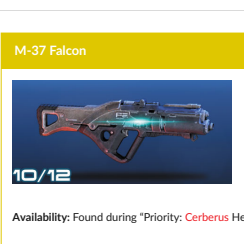
Availability: Found during "Priority: Citadel" (Visit the Citadel)

The M-76 Revenant unleashes a storm of deadly high-velocity slugs. It has low accuracy but a high thermal clip capacity and packs considerable firepower.

This weapon is protected against replication by sophisticated Fabrication Right Management (FRM) technology. Only the richest and most powerful warlords can afford the Revenant.

Level I	Level X
	

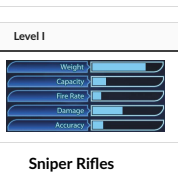
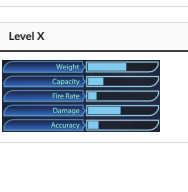
M-37 Falcon



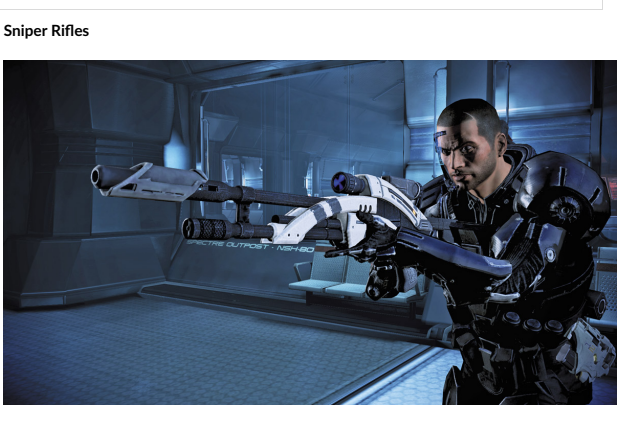
Availability: Found during "Priority: Cerberus Headquarters" (Assault the Illusive Man's Base)

This Alliance rifle launches 25-mm mini-grenades. Lighter and more accurate than most grenade launchers, the Falcon burns through specialized ammunition and standard thermal clips.

A field fabrication kit generates this ammunition, leaving the clips as the rifle's only limitation.

Level I	Level X
	

Sniper Rifles



Accurately firing from great distances is the job of the sniper rifle. Favored by the Infiltrator class the most, many sniper rifles provide single, powerful shots before charging a new thermal clip into place.

There are some semiautomatic rifles that make for great midranged weapons. While the sniper rifle is typically meant for longer ranges, it's possible to use them in close quarters.

This is especially true during single-player, where mods exist to slow down time and allow for lethal snapshots to a target's weak points.

In multiplayer, you lose out on the time dilation effects, but if a player has the reflexes for it, sniper rifles can be remarkably flexible.

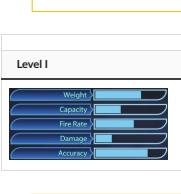
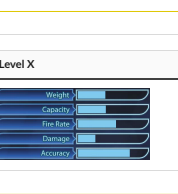
M-13 Raptor

Availability: Found during "Priority: Sur'Kesh" (Free the Krogan Females)

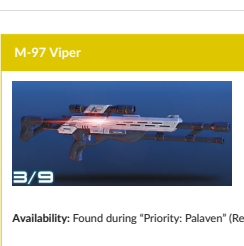
The Raptor is a human version of a turian weapon developed for conflict on the low-gravity world Amar.

Fighting at longer ranges than expected, the turians optimized a low-recoil semiautomatic rifle with a scope and issued it to their regular infantry; this created a hybrid weapon that was half assault rifle and half sniper weapon.

Cerberus assigns the Raptor to Nemesis snipers.

Level I	Level X
	

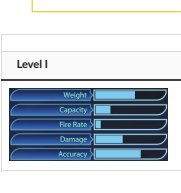
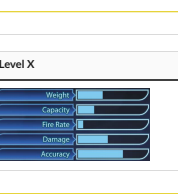
M-97 Viper



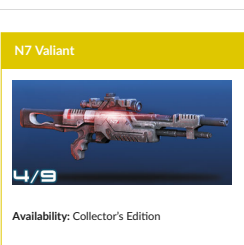
Availability: Found during "Priority: Palaven" (Rescue the Turian Primarch)

The Viper is a semiautomatic, rapid-fire sniper rifle manufactured by Rosenkov Materials. Rosenkov developed a patented automated-release system that assists with thermal clip ejection, shortening the Viper's reload time.

This rifle is popular with military snipers, who appreciate a long-range gun that can snap off multiple shots in the blink of an eye.

Level I	Level X
	

N7 Valiant

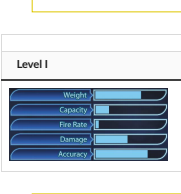
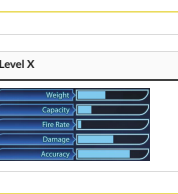


Availability: Collector's Edition

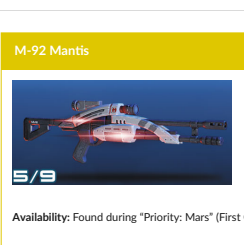
The Valiant is a sniper rifle tested by Alliance soldiers during a series of harsh survival exercises on the planet Kruljaven.

This streamlined weapon employs a sophisticated fire-control system that improves accuracy by stabilizing the barrel during targeting.

Although this comes at the cost of reduced capacity and rate of fire, most soldiers find the increase in precision and quick reloading time a worthy trade-off.

Level I	Level X
	

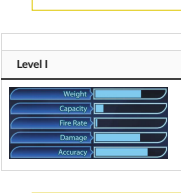
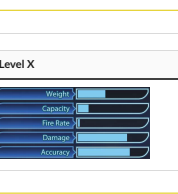
M-92 Mantis



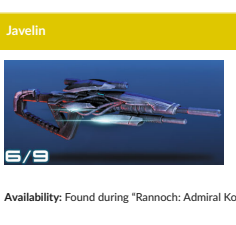
Availability: Found during "Priority: Mars" (First Chance for Hope)

The Mantis is a powerful sniper rifle able to take out most targets in a single shot. It's incredibly accurate at long range, but the rate of fire is slow.

Manufactured by Devlon Industries, the Mantis is primarily used by police and planetary militia groups.

Level I	Level X
	

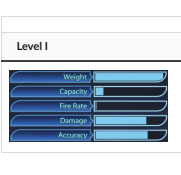
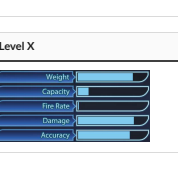
Javelin



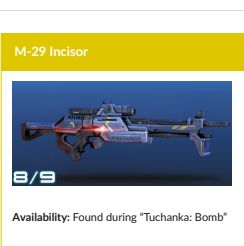
Availability: Found during "Rannoch: Admiral Koris" (Save the Admiral)

Called the Javelin by Alliance marines, this geth weapon holds a reservoir of ferrofluid, magnetically drawn into the firing chamber and expelled at lethal speeds.

Like a high-pressure water jet, the ferrorfluid cuts through nearly anything it hits with so much heat that it resembles a beam of light and causes terrible wounds.

Level I	Level X
	

M-29 Incisor

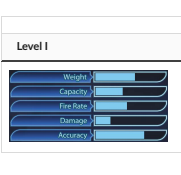
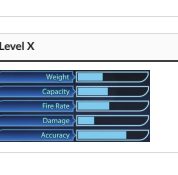


Availability: Found during "Tuchanka: Bomb"

The Incisor is a sniper rifle designed to overload active defenses.

Firing three shots with each pull of the trigger, the Incisor was initially advertised as having negligible recoil, although under real combat conditions, the second and third rounds frequently climb in difficulty.

The noise of the burst is comparable to a single rifle shot in duration, making it no easier to locate the sniper by sound.

Level I	Level X
	

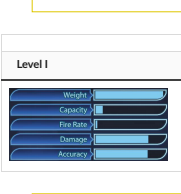
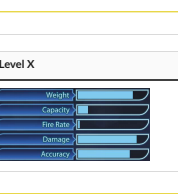
M-98 Widow

Availability: Found during "Priority: Thessia"

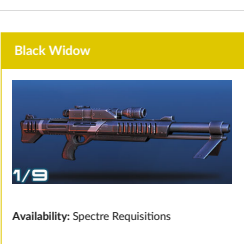
Several research firms spent a considerable fortune trying to redesign the Widow sniper rifle.

Their goal was to retain the geth weapon's considerable firepower while reducing its recoil so that the gun could be fired without breaking a nonsynthetic's arm.

After much trial and error, one company finally produced a usable model rolled out to the galactic market.

Level I	Level X
	

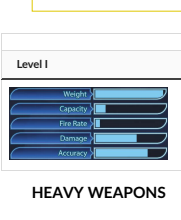
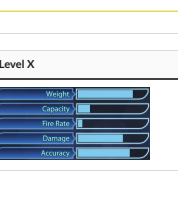
Black Widow



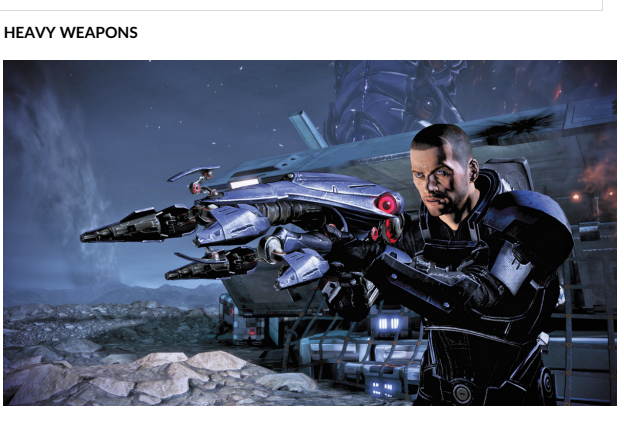
Availability: Spectre Requisitions

The Alliance wanted to reduce the reload time of the original Widow Rifle, without sacrificing its stopping power.

The solution was to increase the number of shots the gun could fire before it needed a fresh thermal clip. Heavy for a sniper rifle, the Black Widow's firepower more than compensates for its encumbrance.

Level I	Level X
	

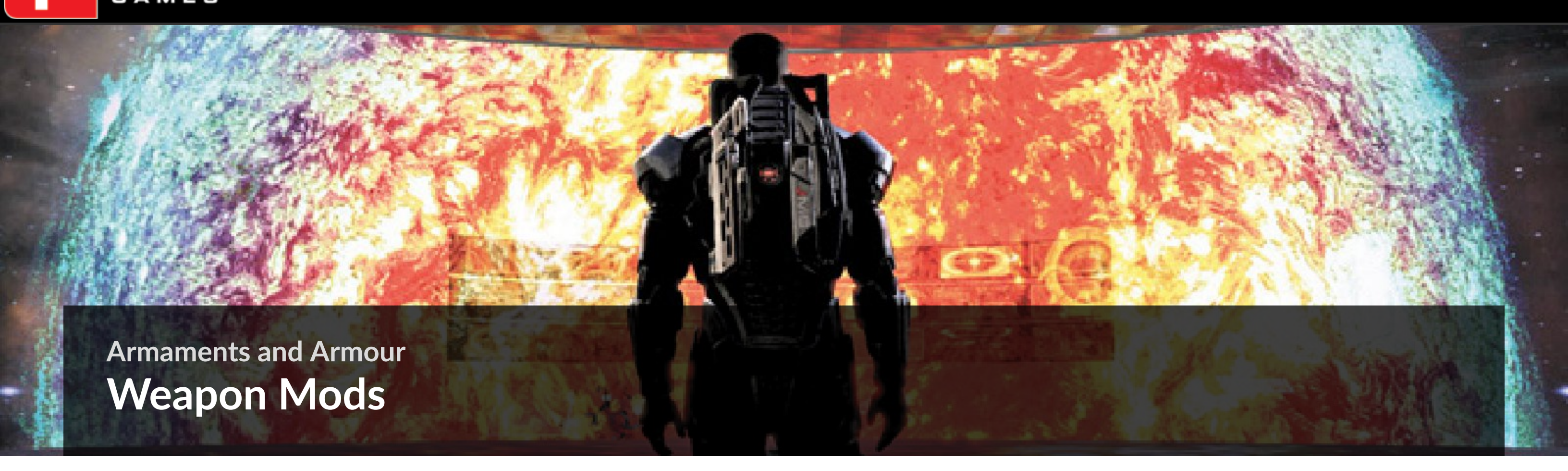
HEAVY WEAPONS



Heavy weapons make a return to Mass Effect 3, with a twist. In single-player, heavy weapons are no longer selected prior to a mission; they are entirely situational and must be found and used in the field.

They are typically located in places where judicious use of their power can make life much easier...and much harder if you miss your mark.

In multiplayer, all characters have access to the Cobra Missile Launcher, but ammunition for this weapon is limited and cannot be replenished midmission. For more details, see the Multiplayer section.



Armaments and Armour

Weapon Mods

Weapon Mods

Returning to *Mass Effect 3* is the ability to customize your guns with specialized modifications that boost various stats or add special melee attachments.

Mods can be used to enhance a weapon in ways that may help cover for their deficiencies or complement a given play style.

They are available for both single- and multiplayer and can be a deciding factor for survival in either mode. Generally, mods appear in both modes, but some mods are exclusive to one mode or the other.

Certain effects present in single-player will not be in multiplayer. Mods are not universal; each weapon will have its own set to find and choose from.

During a first playthrough, it's recommended you focus on weapons you intend to use the most. There's only so much money to be made during an initial playthrough, and even imported Shepards may not have enough money to buy absolutely everything.

Similar to weapons, mods can be leveled up with successive purchases or pick-ups of a given mod, up to a maximum of Level 5.

Assault Rifle Mods

Name	Description	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Assault Rifle Stability Damper	Distributes recoil with sliding system of counterweights compatible with kinetic coil generators. Reduces weapon kickback.	Increases Weapon Stability by 30%	Increases Weapon Stability by 40%	Increases Weapon Stability by 50%	Increases Weapon Stability by 60%	Increases Weapon Stability by 70%
Assault Rifle Magazine Upgrade	Increases magazine capacity, allowing more shots before a reload.	Increases rounds per magazine by 40%	Increases rounds per magazine by 50%	Increases rounds per magazine by 60%	Increases rounds per magazine by 70%	Increases rounds per magazine by 80%
Assault Rifle Piercing Mod	Capacitor boosts kinetic coil generators, increasing shot penetration.	Allows bullets to pierce .50 meter thick objects, at 60% reduced damage. Ignores 25% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce .65 meter thick objects, at 55% reduced damage. Ignores 35% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce .80 meter thick objects, at 50% reduced damage. Ignores 45% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce .95 meter thick objects, at 45% reduced damage. Ignores 55% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce 1.10 meter thick objects, at 40% reduced damage. Ignores 65% defense of armored targets.
Assault Rifle Extended Barrel	Lengthens barrel, creating greater bullet velocity and impact.	Increases damage by 15%	Increases damage by 17.5%	Increases damage by 20%	Increases damage by 22.5%	Increases damage by 25%
Assault Rifle Precision Scope	Simple 4x optical scope to enhance stability while zoomed. Increases accuracy while moving and taking damage.	Increases accuracy by 15%	Increases accuracy by 20%	Increases accuracy by 25%	Increases accuracy by 30%	Increases accuracy by 35%

Heavy Pistol Mods

Name	Description	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Pistol Melee Stunner	Small attachment to muzzle, causing massive damage to meleed targets.	Increases melee damage by 15%	Increases melee damage by 17.5%	Increases melee damage by 20%	Increases melee damage by 22.5%	Increases melee damage by 25%
Pistol Piercing Mod	Capacitor boosts kinetic coil generators, increasing shot penetration.	Allows bullets to pierce .50 meter thick objects, at 60% reduced damage. Ignores 25% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce .50 meter thick objects, at 60% reduced damage. Ignores 25% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce .80 meter thick objects, at 50% reduced damage. Ignores 45% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce .95 meter thick objects, at 45% reduced damage. Ignores 55% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce 1.10 meter thick objects, at 40% reduced damage. Ignores 65% defense of armored targets.
Pistol Magazine Upgrade	Increases magazine capacity, allowing more shots before a reload.	Increases rounds per magazine by 40%	Increases rounds per magazine by 50%	Increases rounds per magazine by 60%	Increases rounds per magazine by 70%	Increases rounds per magazine by 80%
Pistol High-Caliber Barrel	Allows wider projectiles, causing more trauma on impact. Ballistically optimized to maintain penetrative power.	Increases damage by 15%	Increases damage by 17.5%	Increases damage by 20%	Increases damage by 22.5%	Increases damage by 25%
Pistol Scope	Simple 2x optical scope to enhance stability while zoomed. Increases accuracy while moving and taking damage.	Increases accuracy by 15%	Increases accuracy by 20%	Increases accuracy by 25%	Increases accuracy by 30%	Increases accuracy by 35%

Shotgun Mods

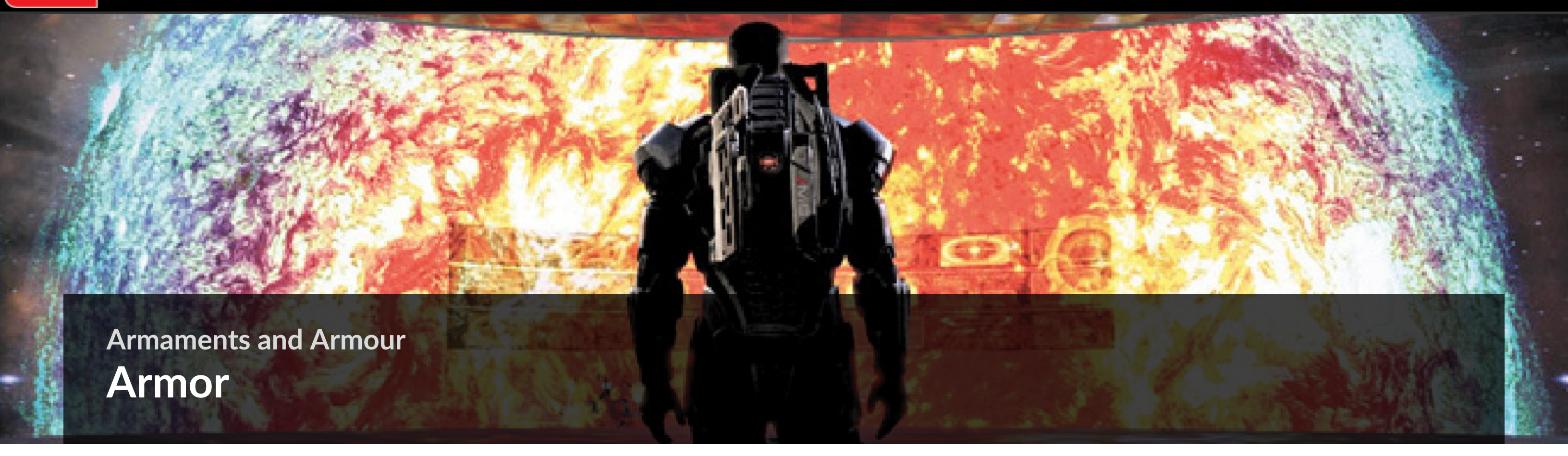
Name	Description	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Shotgun Smart Choke	Servo motors hooked up to adjustable system tighten or loosen pellet spread for maximum accuracy.	Increases accuracy by 30%	Increases accuracy by 35%	Increases accuracy by 40%	Increases accuracy by 45%	Increases accuracy by 50%
Shotgun Spare Thermal Clip	Adds sockets to raise thermal clip capacity, increasing number of spare shots.	Increases spare shot capacity by 50%	Increases spare shot capacity by 60%	Increases spare shot capacity by 70%	Increases spare shot capacity by 80%	Increases spare shot capacity by 90%
Shotgun Shredder Mod	Capacitor boosts kinetic coil generators, increasing shot penetration.	Allows bullets to pierce .25 meter thick objects, at 60% reduced damage. Ignores 25% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce .35 meter thick objects, at 55% reduced damage. Ignores 35% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce .45 meter thick objects, at 50% reduced damage. Ignores 45% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce .55 meter thick objects, at 45% reduced damage. Ignores 55% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce .65 meter thick objects, at 40% reduced damage. Ignores 65% defense of armored targets.
Shotgun Blade Attachment	Tungstent carbide bayonet with recessed edge for increased melee damage.	Increases melee damage by 15%	Increases melee damage by 17.5%	Increases melee damage by 20%	Increases melee damage by 22.5%	Increases melee damage by 25%
Shotgun High-Caliber Barrel	Allows wider projectiles, causing more trauma on impact. Ballistically optimized to maintain penetrative power.	Increases damage by 15%	Increases damage by 17.5%	Increases damage by 20%	Increases damage by 22.5%	Increases damage by 25%

Sniper Rifle Mods

Name	Description	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Sniper Rifle Concentration Mod	Biometric sensors and auto-targeting software adjust to the user's pulse and breath rate, assisting aim.	Increases damage by 5%, speeds perception by 25%, enhancing aim for a brief time.	Increases damage by 7.5%, speeds perception by 27.5%, enhancing aim for a brief time.	Increases damage by 10%, speeds perception by 30%, enhancing aim for a brief time.	Increases damage by 12.5%, speeds perception by 32.5%, enhancing aim for a brief time.	Increases damage by 15%, speeds perception by 35%, enhancing aim for a brief time.
Sniper Rifle Spare Thermal Clip	Adds sockets to raise thermal clip capacity, increasing number of spare shots.	Increases spare shot capacity by 50%	Increases spare shot capacity by 60%	Increases spare shot capacity by 70%	Increases spare shot capacity by 80%	Increases spare shot capacity by 90%
Sniper Rifle Extended Barrel	Lengthens barrel, creating greater bullet velocity and impact.	Increases damage by 15%	Increases damage by 17.5%	Increases damage by 20%	Increases damage by 22.5%	Increases damage by 25%
Sniper Rifle Piercing Mod	Capacitor boosts kinetic coil generators, increasing shot penetration.	Allows bullets to pierce .75 meter thick objects, at 50% reduced damage. Ignores 25% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce .90 meter thick objects, at 45% reduced damage. Ignores 35% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce 1.05 meter thick objects, at 40% reduced damage. Ignores 45% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce 1.2 meter thick objects, at 35% reduced damage. Ignores 55% defense of armored targets.	Allows bullets to pierce 1.35 meter thick objects, at 30% reduced damage. Ignores 65% defense of armored targets.
Sniper Rifle Enhanced Scope	Stability-enhancing scope increases accuracy while moving and taking damage. Highlights targets through smoke.	Increases accuracy by 15% and helps aim through smoke.	Increases accuracy by 20% and helps aim through smoke.	Increases accuracy by 25% and helps aim through smoke.	Increases accuracy by 30% and helps aim through smoke.	Increases accuracy by 35% and helps aim through smoke.

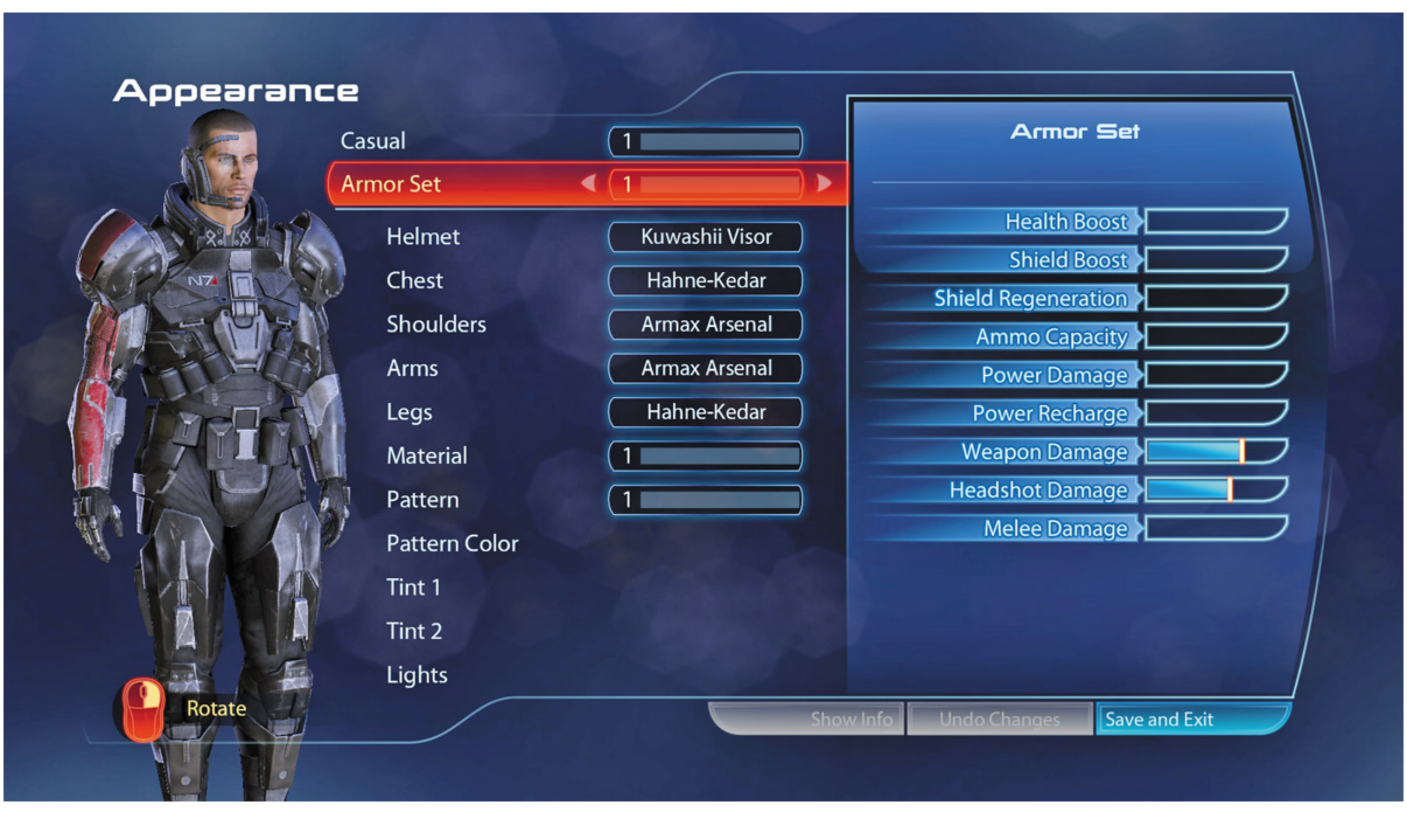
Submachine Gun Mods

Name	Description	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
SMG Ultralight Materials	Superior lightweight alloys replace weapon parts, making weapon less obtrusive and easier to handle.	Reduces weapon weight by 50%	Reduces weapon weight by 60%	Reduces weapon weight by 70%	Reduces weapon weight by 80%	Reduces weapon weight by 90%
SMG Magazine Upgrade	Increases magazine capacity, allowing more shots before a reload.	Increases rounds per magazine by 40%	Increases rounds per magazine by 50%	Increases rounds per magazine by 60%	Increases rounds per magazine by 70%	Increases rounds per magazine by 80%
SMG High-Caliber Barrel	Allows wider projectiles, causing more trauma on impact. Ballistically optimized to maintain penetrative power.	Increases damage by 15%	Increases damage by 17.5%	Increases damage by 20%	Increases damage by 22.5%	Increases damage by 25%
SMG Heat Sink	Increases heat conductivity of thermal clip receiver. Negates heat generated by some shots.	Every round has a 25% chance of not using up the thermal clip.	Every round has a 30% chance of not using up the thermal clip.	Every round has a 35% chance of not using up the thermal clip.	Every round has a 40% chance of not using up the thermal clip.	Every round has a 45% chance of not using up the thermal clip.
SMG Scope	Simple 2x optical scope to enhance stability while zoomed. Increases accuracy while moving and taking damage.	Increases accuracy by 15%	Increases accuracy by 20%	Increases accuracy by 25%	Increases accuracy by 30%	Increases accuracy by 35%



Armor

Armor



Casual 1
Armor Set 1
Helmet Kuwashii Visor
Chest Hahne-Kedar
Shoulders Armax Arsenal
Arms Armax Arsenal
Legs Hahne-Kedar
Material 1
Pattern 1
Pattern Color
Tint 1
Tint 2
Lights

It's inevitable that you're going to take a few shots before the fight's done, and the kind of armor you equip can determine whether you survive.

The ability to customize Shepard's armor returns in *Mass Effect 3* , with players able to select separate pieces for the arms, legs, chest, shoulders, and head.

In addition to the various sets that can be found piece by piece, there are special full-armor sets that have a series of special bonuses but otherwise cannot be customized in any way.

Every piece or set of armor you obtain has its own stat boosts that can enhance your powers, your skill with firearms, or how hard you can take a swing at someone.

Experiment with the various armor types and see what complements your play style the most!

Helmets

Name	Equipment Bonus	Location
N7 Helmet	10% Health Boost	Starting Equipment
Umbra Visor	10% Power Damage	Thessia
Kestrel Helmet	10% Ammo Capacity	Batarian Citadel Store
Recon Hood	10% Weapon Damage	Citadel
Capacitor Helmet	10% Shield Regen Time	Planet Benning
Kuwashii Visor	5% Weapon Damage, 10% Carrying Capacity	Salarian Citadel Store
Archon Visor	10% Recharge Speed	geth Dreadnought
Sentry Interface	10% Shield Boost	Planet Sur'Kesh
Death Mask	10% Melee Damage	Planet Tuchanka
Mnemonic Visor	5% Power Damage, 5% Recharge Speed	Grissom Academy
Delumcore Overlay	10% Weapon Damage, 5% Carrying Capacity	Kronos Station
Security Helmet	5% Health Boost, 5% Shield Boost	Citadel

Torso

Name	Equipment Bonus	Location
N7 Chestplate	10% Health Boost	Starting Equipment
Kassa Fabrication Chestplate	10% Shield Regen Time	Planet Mars
Serrice Council Chestplate	10% Power Damage	Grissom Academy
Rosenkov Materials Chestplate	10% Recharge Speed	Planet Cyone
Hahne-Kedar Chestplate	10% Weapon Damage	Planet Tuchanka
Ariake Technologies Chestplate	10% Melee Damage	Human Citadel Store

Shoulder

Name	Equipment Bonus	Location
N7 Shoulder Guards	10% Health Boost	Starting Equipment
Kassa Fabrication Shoulder Guards	10% Shield Boost	Turian Citadel Store
Serrice Council Shoulder Guards	10% Power Damage	Planet Lessus
Rosenkov Materials Shoulder Guards	10% Recharge Speed	Citadel
Hahne-Kedar Shoulder Guards	10% Weapon Damage	Volus Citadel Store
Armax Arsenal Shoulder Guards	5% Weapon Damage, 10% Carrying Capacity	Planet Menae
Ariake Technologies Shoulder Guards	10% Melee Damage	Planet Utukku

Arms

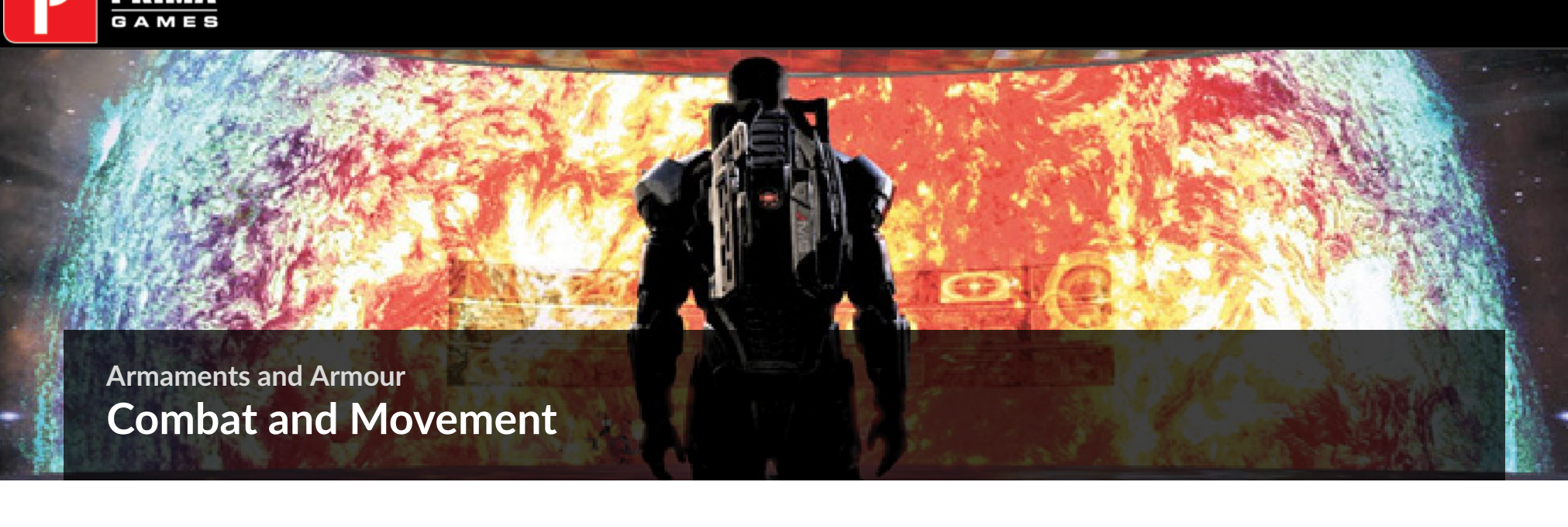
Name	Equipment Bonus	Location
N7 Gauntlets	10% Health Boost	Starting Equipment
Kassa Fabrication Gauntlets	10% Shield Boost	Planet Rannoch
Serrice Council Gauntlets	10% Power Damage	Asari Citadel Store
Rosenkov Materials Gauntlets	10% Recharge Speed	Planet Tuchanka
Hahne-Kedar Gauntlets	10% Weapon Damage	Hanar Citadel Store
Armax Arsenal Gauntlets	5% Weapon Damage, 10% Carrying Capacity	Planet Tuchanka
Ariake Technologies Gauntlets	10% Melee Damage	Planet Mars

Legs

Name	Equipment Bonus	Location
N7 Greaves	10% Health Boost	Starting Equipment
Kassa Fabrication Greaves	10% Shield Boost	Planet Gellix
Serrice Council Greaves	10% Power Damage	Kronos Station
Rosenkov Materials Greaves	10% Recharge Speed	Citadel Specter Requisitions
Hahne-kedar Greaves	10% Weapon Damage	Planet Menae
Armax Arsenal Greaves	10% Ammo Capacity	Planet Sur'Kesh
Ariake Technologies Greaves	10% Melee Damage	Planet Ontarom

Full Body Armor Sets

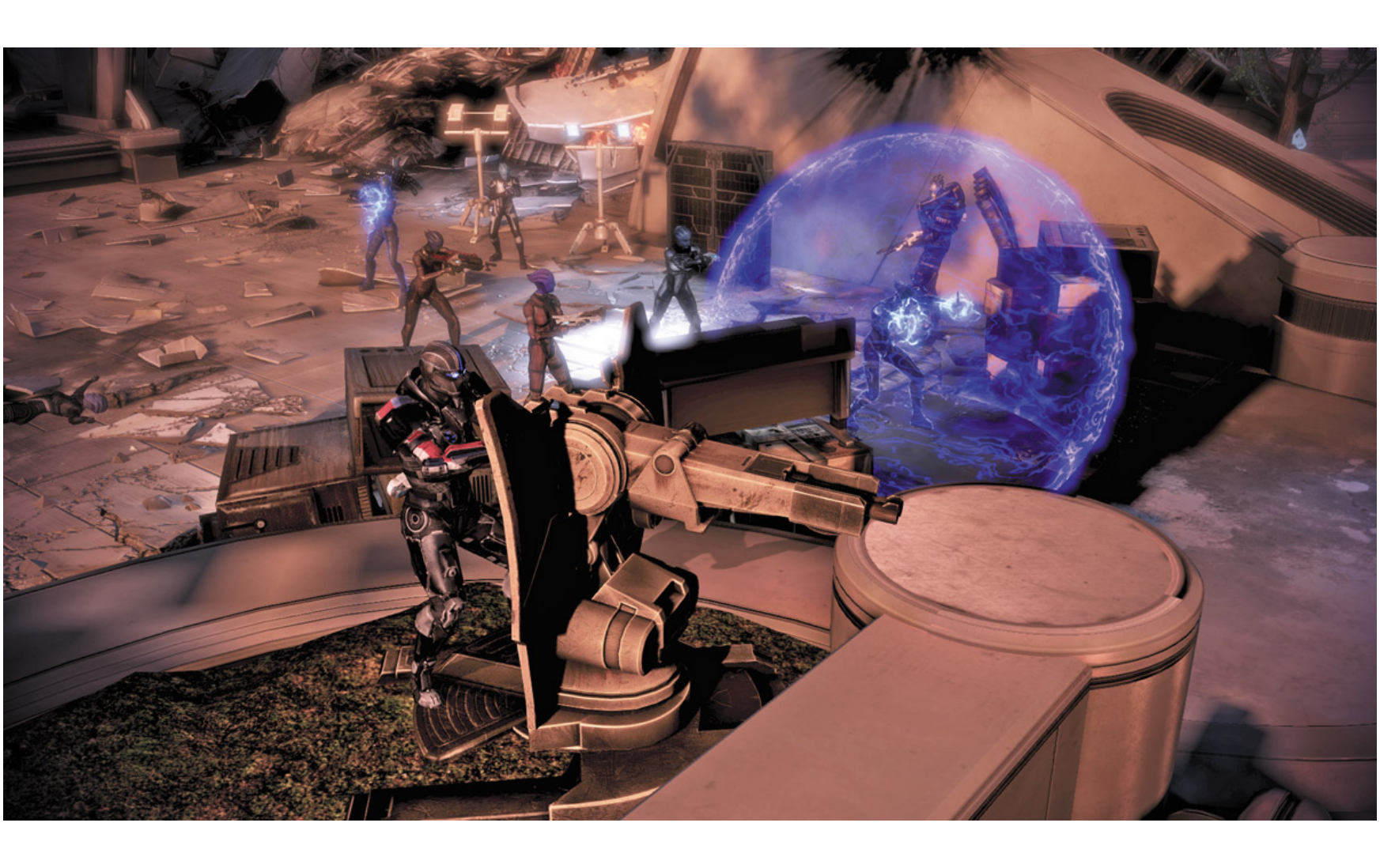
Name	Equipment Bonus	Location
Terminus Armor	30% Shield Boost, 15% Ammo Capacity, 15% Melee Damage	Batarian Citadel Store
Blood Dragon Armor	20% Shield Boost, 30% Power Damage, 10% Recharge Speed	Hanar Citadel Store
Collector Armor	20% Health Boost, 20% Shield Boost, 20% Shield Regen Time	Asari Citadel Store
Cerberus Armor	20% Health Boost, 10% Shield Boost, 20% Weapon Damage, 10% Ammo Capacity	Volus Citadel Store
Inferno Armor	30% Power Damage, 30% Recharge Speed	Human Citadel Store



Armaments and Armour

Combat and Movement

COMBAT



Banshee
Barrier

Mass Effect 3 has seen the most extensive set of changes and additions to combat of any game in the whole franchise.

While still retaining typical RPG features such as experience points and character statistics, player skills are what drives success or failure during each encounter.

Movement and combat are more visceral than ever. Shepard is more agile, more lethal at close range, and is more adept at maneuvering through the environment than before.

Similarly, the enemy has seen the same dramatic improvements in ability and are more aggressive, actively flanking Shepard and his/her squad, even laying down suppressive fire to keep them pinned in place.

Certain threats can even kill you instantly, regardless of your health and shield levels!

To survive in single-player and multiplayer, you must be attentive to what's going on in front of you, and you must be able to navigate the environments smoothly, even while under fire.

Movement

Walking

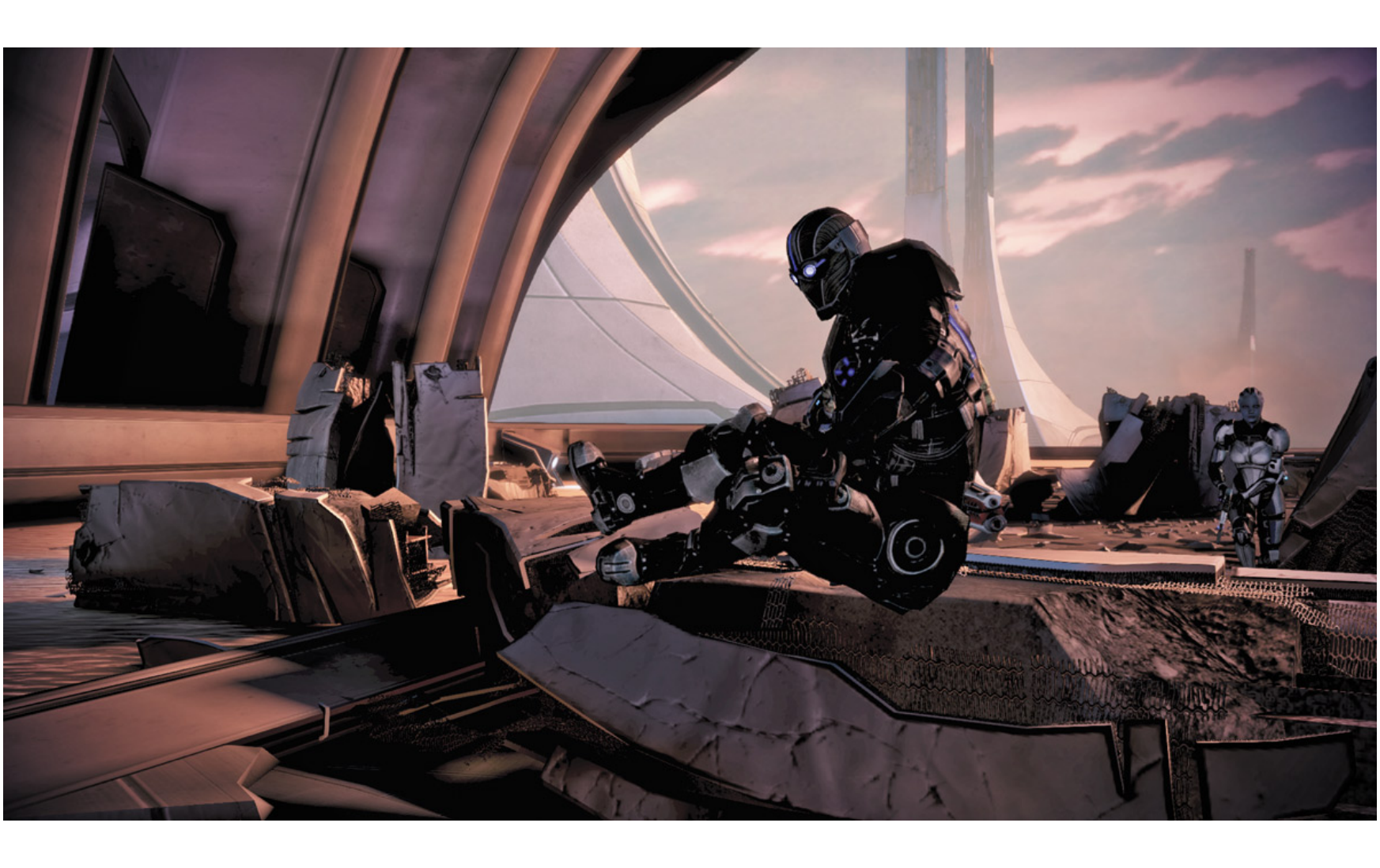
Basic movement in and out of combat consists of walking, and it is possible to run while outside of combat.

Storming

When in combat, you sprint forward with greater speed, sacrificing your ability to make sharp turns in order to get from one location to another.

You can storm indefinitely; just make sure you know where you're headed if you're taking fire. It's possible to take a powerful enough hit that you are knocked out of your storm.

This is potentially fatal, as you're still very vulnerable to incoming fire as you stagger!



If you storm at waist-high pieces of terrain, your character will usually automatically take cover once they reach it.

However, by tapping the Storm button just as you reach cover, you can actually vault over those obstacles in one smooth motion. This is especially useful for aggressive players, as it keeps your weapon pointed at the enemy while you advance.

Evading

Previously in Mass Effect, your only real responses to getting shot at were to sprint to the nearest cover or fight back with your guns or special powers. If for whatever reason neither option was immediately available, you were somewhat out of luck.

Now you can actually evade in the direction of your choosing. Shepard can combat roll into cover or leap backward just as a powerful enemy takes a swing at him. This is also an amazing tool to use when flanking enemies in close-quarters combat.

It's possible to bait certain enemies into melee attacks with long windups, roll just past them, and take them from their unprotected sides.

Taking Cover

A basic but vital part of combat, taking cover keeps you out of a battle while still giving you the ability to mark and engage targets and direct your squadmates (and their abilities across the whole squad) to relative safety.

Marauder
Shields

Cover is not perfectly safe, however! Your guns can punch through cover, particularly with better mods equipped, and your enemies can do the same.

Grenades can be lobbed to land next to you, prompting a hasty retreat or advance to safer pastures.

Environmental hazards may prompt you to stay on the move.

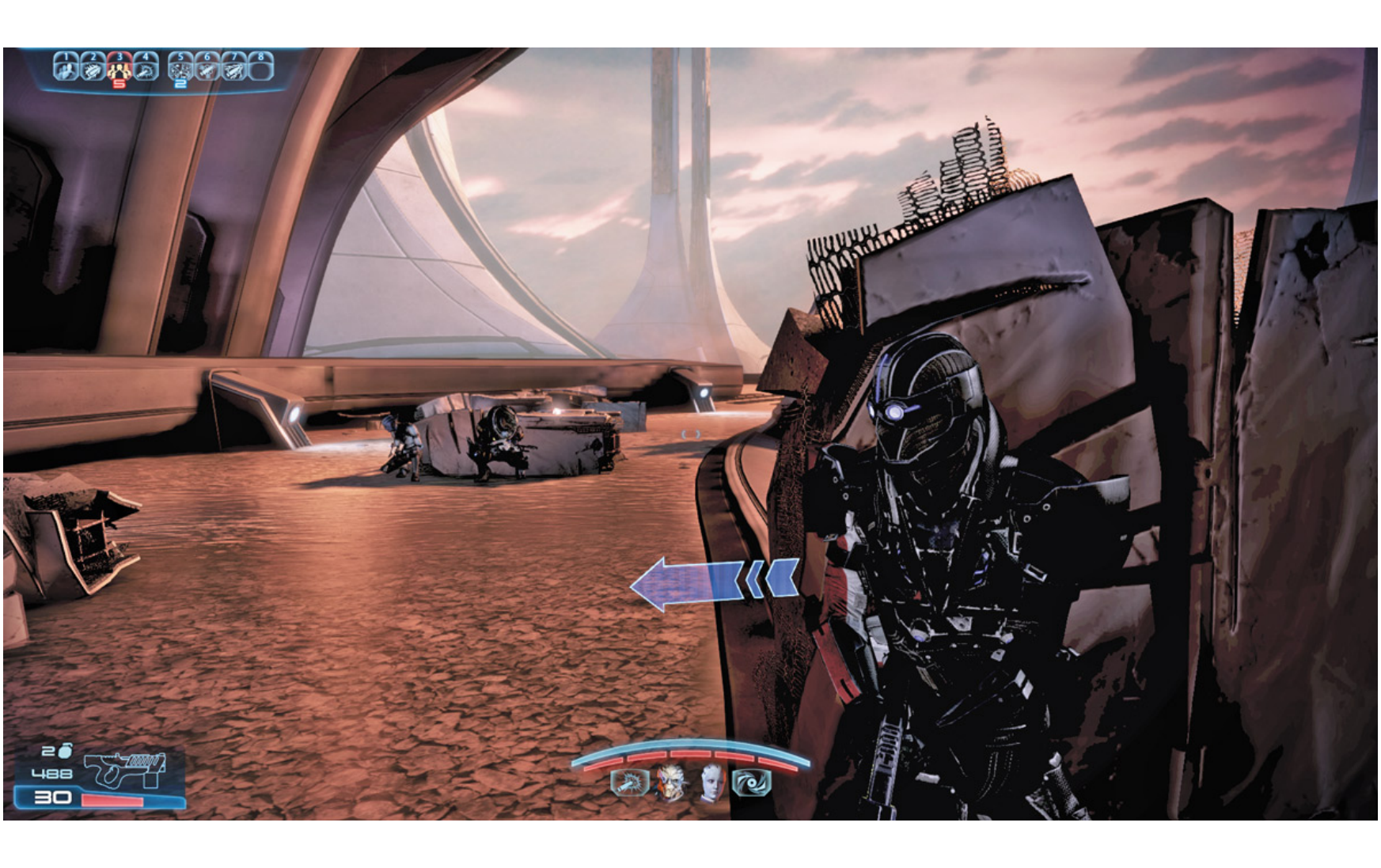
Enemies might be able to clip parts of you that are exposed outside of cover, or they could be in a superior position, attacking from elevated positions or flanking you to bypass your cover entirely.

Remember that cover is only a temporary solution to danger in a firefight. Being observant and being a better shot with your guns and abilities is just as important.

In multiplayer, it is especially important to not get too comfortable behind any object you're hiding behind.

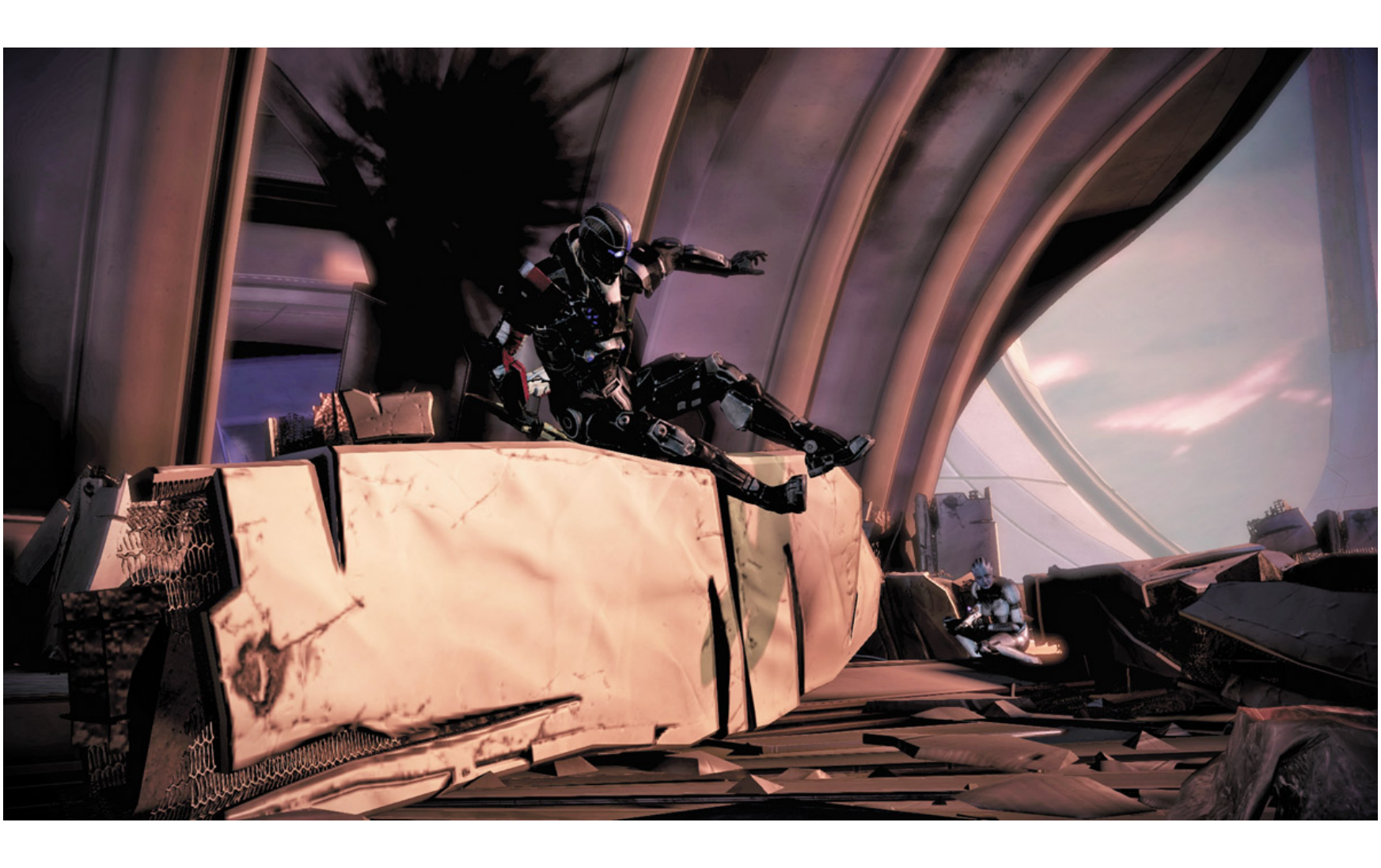
Enemies are much more aggressive and will use their numbers to flank your position in hopes of taking you out.

Cover Transitions



You have the ability to vault over pieces of cover, transition from one piece of cover to another, and shift from one side of cover to another.

Once in cover, you can strafe along the length of it to the left and right. If the cover changes in height, your character will change their stance accordingly.



Vaulting over cover allows you to quickly advance at the enemy or to another safe spot a little farther ahead of their current position, all without having to navigate around the current obstacle.

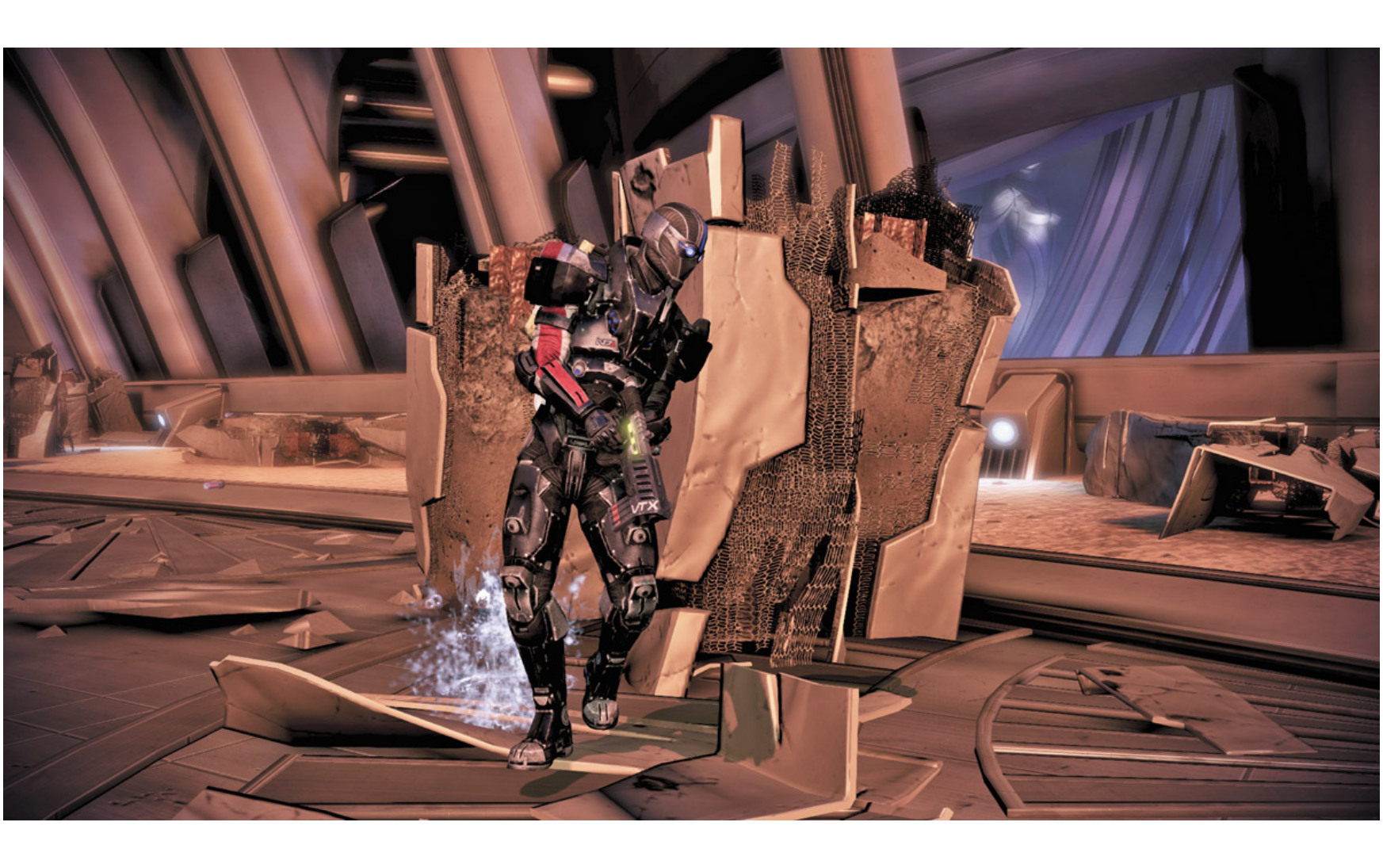
Vaulting is one of the faster ways to leave cover, but it also makes you vulnerable to incoming fire.

Transitioning between pieces of cover is one of the safest and quickest ways to remain protected while under fire.

It also simultaneously allows you and your squad to shift fields of fire to meet enemy reinforcements or sudden rushes on a different flank.

Get to the far corner of any piece of cover, and if you hold your movement keys or analog stick in the direction the cover ends, an arrow will display where you will travel next when you press the appropriate button.

You can also move out from a corner by pressing forward and following the command prompts, with your character swinging around the cover and moving ahead.



You can also transition to another part of the same piece of cover. If you're behind a crate that is suddenly flanked, you could engage the enemy from where you sit, but you'll still get shot up.

However, by moving to the edge of the enemy's current position, you will transition to the crate's other side, keeping it between you and the flanking foe.

On the Defensive

At some point, you will get hit by enemy attacks during the course of battle, and it's important to know what you need to watch for when it happens. Every character class has two meters to monitor: your shield meter and your health meter.

Your shields are intended to stop, or at least blunt, enemy assaults before they reach the armor and flesh behind them. They will drop precipitously under fire until you find cover.

On higher difficulties, the shields last for a scant few seconds at best before the enemy starts chewing through your health. Pay attention to the status of your shields, and if you can spare a moment behind cover to let them recharge, do so.

Marauder
Shields

Health is signified as a segmented red bar just underneath your shield indicator. The segments indicate limits to how much health will be regenerated after you spend time away from fire. To refill empty segments, you must use a Medi-Gel pack.

Camera Controls

A good soldier is an observant one. Keep your eyes open for anything or anyone you can interact with, either for conversation or pick-ups.

When on combat missions, be thorough when scanning the world around you; this will help you locate more weapon and armor modifications, which you will definitely need if you want to survive the later battles.

In co-op, holding the line against waves of enemies depends heavily on your ability to spot the enemy and catch them well before they've flanked you and your team.

Aiming

Assault Trooper
Health

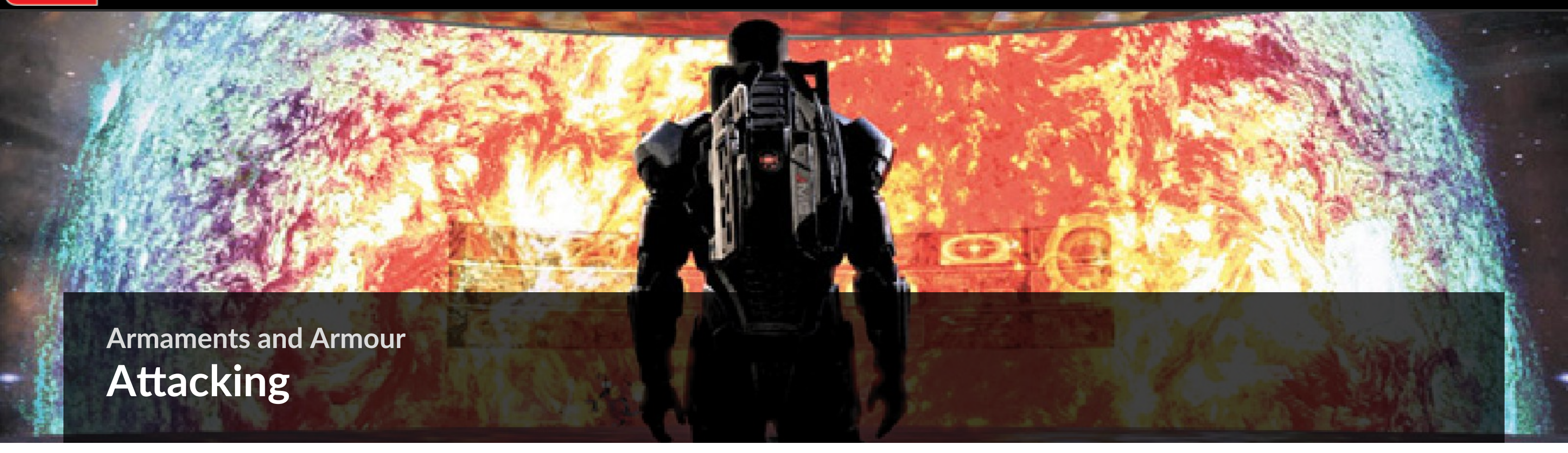
Assault Trooper
Health

When the shooting starts, you aim where your camera points. You can zoom in on targets for more accurate fire at range, but this costs you much of your peripheral vision, depending on the weapon.

With a sniper rifle, you're limited to the area displayed by the scope, and aggressive foes can and will flank you while you're focused elsewhere.

Don't move while scoped unless you absolutely need to take down a threat while moving.

Typically, it's best to stay moving as fast as you can between pieces of cover, as taking aim stops you from sprinting and slows you down, making you an easy target.



Attacking

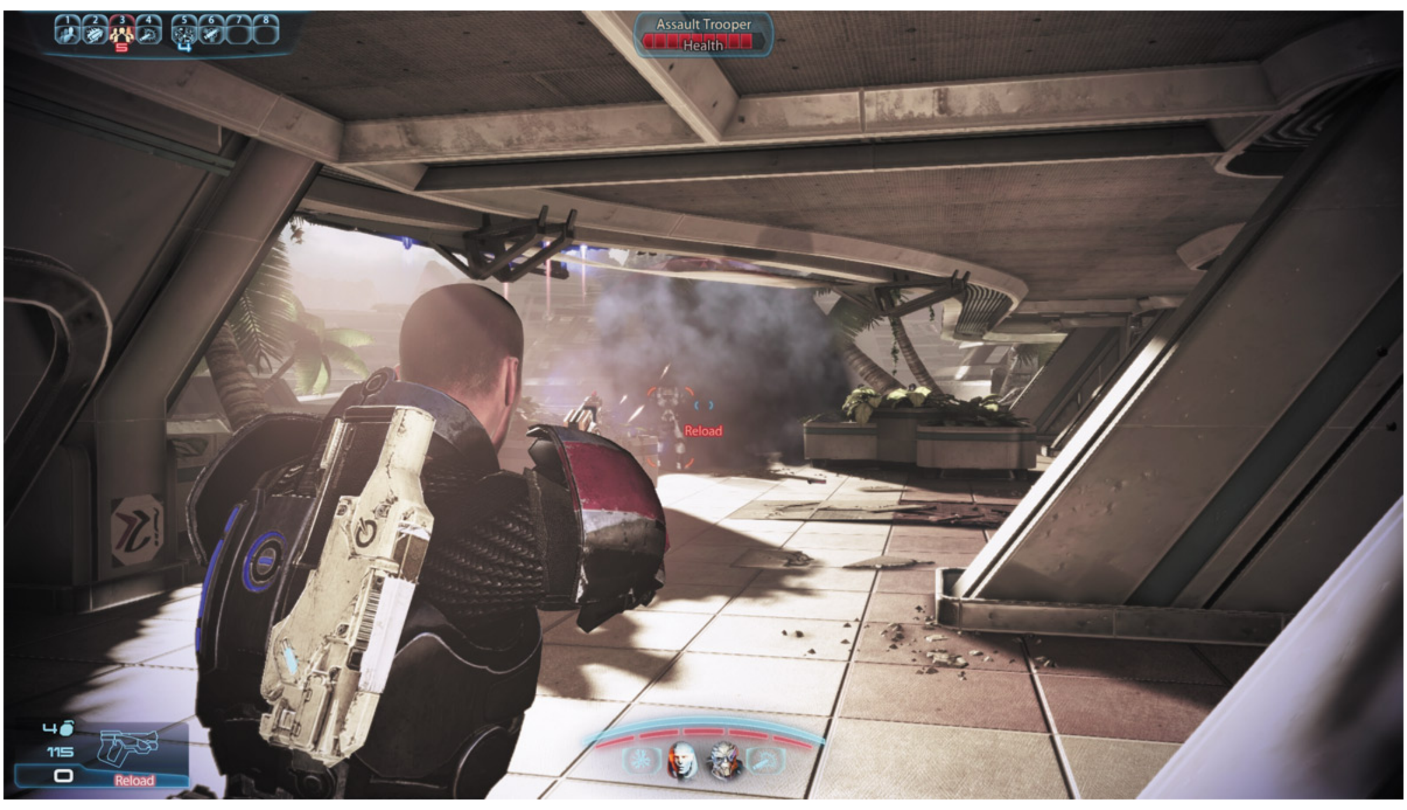
There are essentially three options you have when it comes to dealing with the enemy: using your guns, using your powers, and using your fists.

These are elements that are familiar to most series veterans, but there are some things that have changed that are worth going over here.

Guns, Guns, Guns

Using your weapons is as simple as pointing the camera where you want to shoot and pulling the trigger until the thermal clip needs to be ejected.

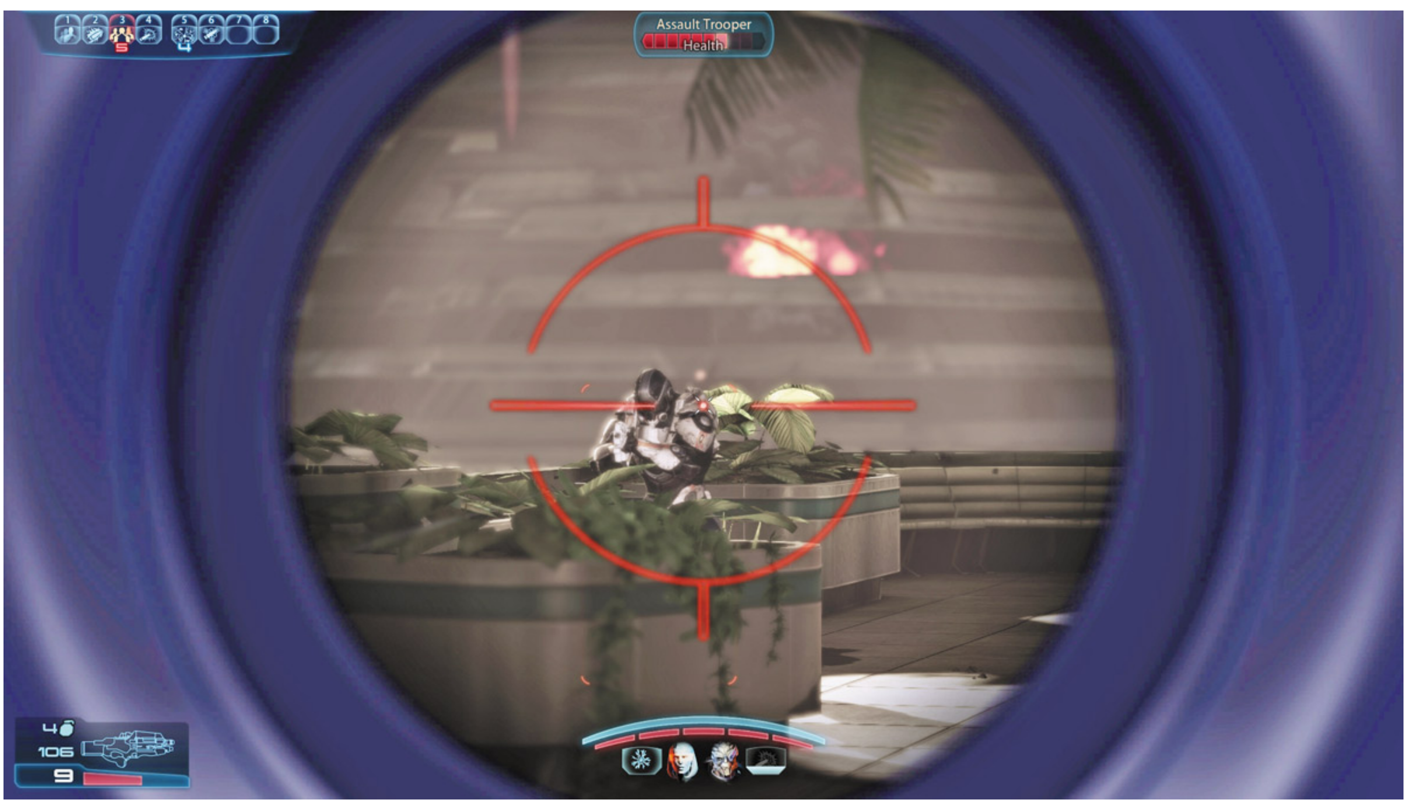
Guns can be fired with or without aiming down the sights, and there are actually good reasons to do either.



From the hip: While this is less accurate than aiming down the sights of a weapon, a major advantage is that you don't lose foot speed, and recoil is not as severe.

Additionally, you don't lose any situational awareness that comes from aiming down the sights; you retain a clearer picture of what is going on around you.

This is actually a solid engagement method at close range with any semiautomatic or fully automatic weapon.



Aiming down the sights: For medium- to long-range encounters, aiming down the sights of a weapon greatly increases your accuracy. If you're trying to land headshots, this is how you'll get the best results.

Sniper rifles in particular benefit from this with their high-powered scopes. Aiming down the sights does have its drawbacks.

You can't sprint while doing this, and your walking speed is reduced, as is the speed with which you can move the camera to aim at new threats.

Recoil is more significant here, making sustained rapid-fire less accurate.

You also lose situational awareness as the camera zooms in closer to your intended victim; this is further compounded for the longer-ranged zooms available to a sniper rifle.

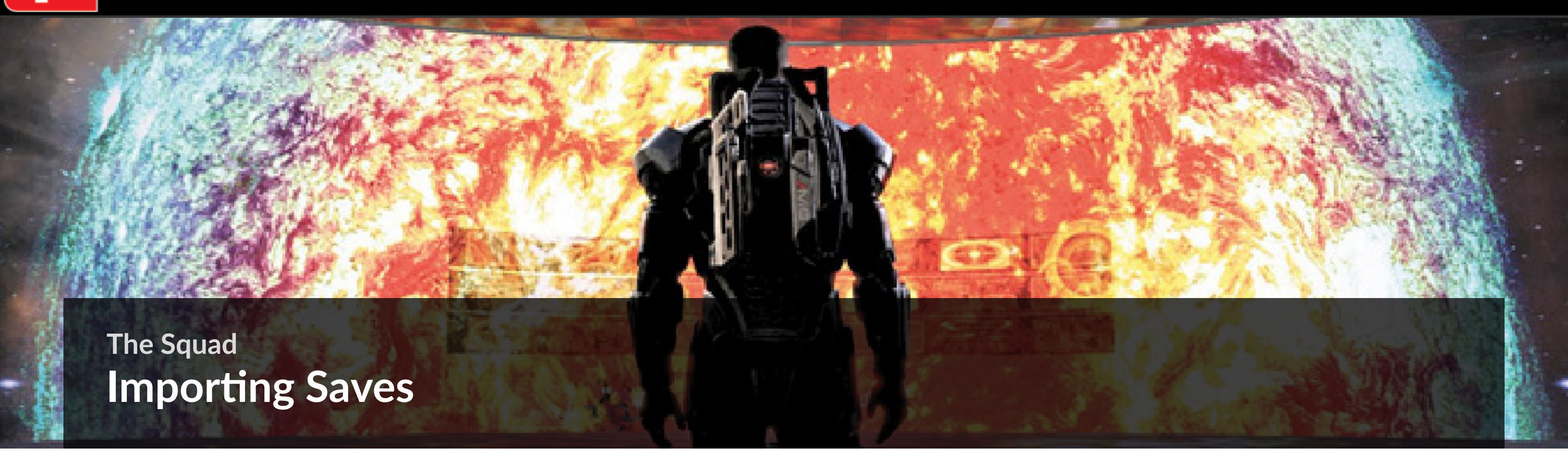
If the enemy is very close, avoid trying to sight in on them and either disengage and fall back or fire from the hip.

NOTE

All weapons have less recoil when fired from cover.

Assault Trooper
Health

It's important to know when to reload, when to switch to a new gun, and what gun to switch to. Generally, before any firefight, you want to have fully loaded weapons so you don't get caught unprepared if you come across the enemy.



Importing Saves

The crew aboard the Normandy is as varied as the possibilities for Commander Shepard. At any given point, the crew aboard the Normandy can range from Biotic power-friendly adepts like Liara to soldiers full of raw power like James.

Commander Shepard is no different. With six classes and a wide range of character traits available to Shepard, players can shape the daring leader into whatever they want, be it a Vanguard heroine or a hero Engineer.

Players who have a long standing history with the *Mass Effect* franchise can import a game save from *Mass Effect 1* or *Mass Effect 2* .

Doing so will import the various moral decisions you've made across previous *Mass Effect* games. Additionally, you will also import whatever characteristics you previously had for Commander Shepard.

For that reason alone, you may be able to begin the game with a Shepard build you've already become accustomed to.

If so, then feel free to skim the section below and use it as much (or as little) as you need. Seasoned veterans may still want to use it for playthroughs with new builds or when playing through the game a second or third time.

Even if you feel comfortable with your particular build of Commander Shepard, go to the specific character sections, beginning with Ashley Williams, later in this guide.

There you will learn everything you need to know about a crewmate's powers and how to romance them, and even learn two build suggestions for each character.

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NOTE

With so many powers and bonus powers available, it's impossible to account for the amount of build combinations in the game. For that reason, we've narrowed it down to two build suggestions per class and per character.

The same goes for imported games. There are far too many variables to account for both *Mass Effect 1* and *Mass Effect 2* , not to mention the numerous downloadable content (DLC) packages released, so we've compiled a quick list of what is assumed as per *Mass Effect 3*.

MASS EFFECT 1

The list below describes the starting parameters if you've never played *Mass Effect 1* or if you're importing a game save without *Mass Effect 1* data.

- Garrus was recruited.
- Wrex was recruited.
- The colony on Feros was not saved.
- Shiala, the asari taken by the Thorian on Feros, was killed.
- The rachni queen on Noveria was killed.
- Wrex died on Virmire, killed by Shepard.
- Shepard did not have any romance.
- The Council died, and the Destiny Ascension was destroyed.
- Udina was named Councilor.
- For all side content (DLC), the assumption is that you did not see the content or complete optional plots.

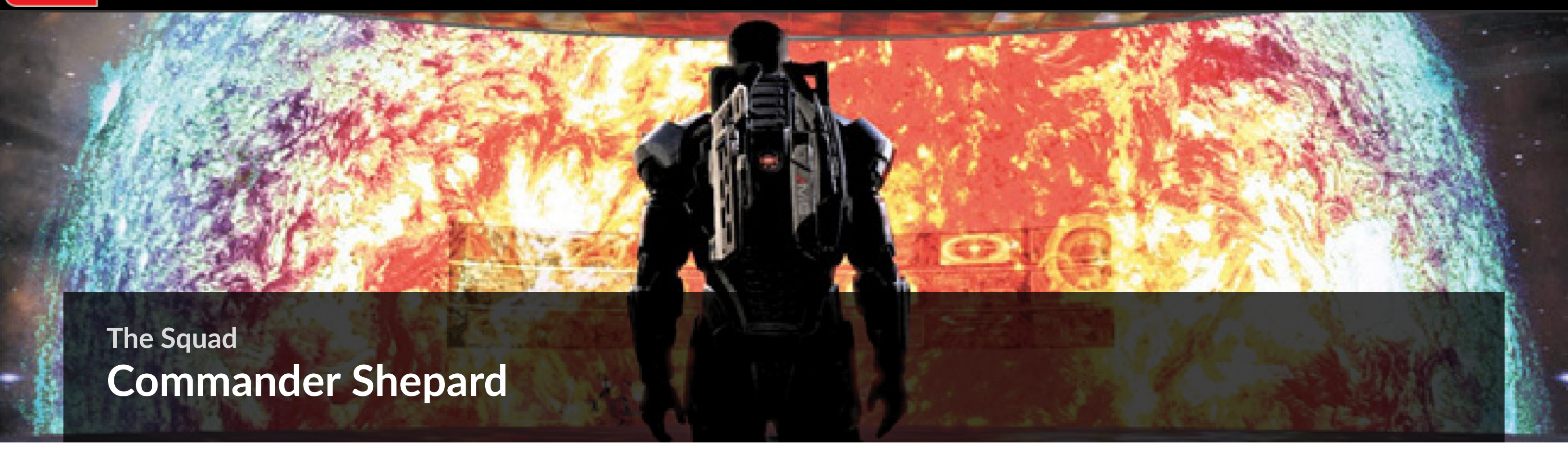
MASS EFFECT 2

The list below describes the starting parameters if you've never played *Mass Effect 2* or if you're importing a game save without *Mass Effect 2* data.

- Shepard is not assumed to have completed any loyalty missions. As a result:
- Shepard did not complete Mordin's loyalty mission and never had the chance to save or destroy the genophage cure data.
- Tali was exiled by her people.
- Shepard did not have any romance.
- Zaeed and Kasumi were never recruited.
- Mordin is alive.
- Garrus is alive.
- Grunt was never woken up from the tank and is never mentioned.
- Jack died during the Suicide Mission.
- Tali was recruited and is alive.
- Tali never romanced.
- Samara was never recruited. She fought her way off of Illium and was later killed by Morinth.
- Thane died during the Suicide Mission.
- Miranda is alive.
- Jacob is alive.
- Legion was never reactivated and does not have the name Legion as a result.
- Shepard destroyed the Collector base rather than turn it over to Cerberus.
- The only Normandy crew members who survived the Suicide Mission were Joker and Chakwas. Yeoman Chambers, Ken, Gabby, and all other Mass Effect 2 non-squad crew are dead.
- Shepard did not complete optional N7 missions or other special assignments (Citadel missions).
- Shepard did not complete Arrival, Overlord, or Lair of the Shadow Broker DLC (but the events of Arrival and Shadow Broker took place offscreen—the batarian system was still destroyed, and Liara is still the Shadow Broker).

NOTE

The two lists above describe the default conditions to any new *Mass Effect 3* player.



Commander Shepard

Commander Shepard was born on April 11, 2154, and has been a lifelong Alliance soldier. After serving on the SSV *Normandy* under Captain Anderson, Shepard later became the first human to join the Spectres.

While working as a Spectre, Shepard foiled another Spectre, Saren, as he attempted to betray the Alliance Systems to the Reapers.

Shortly thereafter, Commander Shepard was killed in action, only to be revived by Cerberus under the Lazarus Project.

Shepard once again took control of the Normandy, recreated as the Normandy SR-2, and foiled the Collectors as they worked in conjunction with the Reapers.

Now, the Reapers have brought the fight to Shepard. Having fallen out of grace with the Alliance, Shepard now serves in the Alliance but has been stripped of his Commander rank.

POWERS

Fitness

Put on some muscle and become fearless in close-quarter combat. More melee damage. More health and shields.

Rank 1—Health and Shield Bonus: 15%; Melee Damage Bonus: 15%

Rank 2—Durability: Increase health and shield bonuses by 10%

Rank 3—Melee Damage: Increase melee damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Melee Damage: Increase melee damage by 30%

Rank 4b—Durability: Increase health and shield bonuses by 15%

Rank 5a—Melee (Increase): Increase melee damage by 75% for 30 seconds when an enemy is killed by heavy melee

Rank 5b—Shield/Barrier Recharge: Decrease shield-recharge delay by 15%

Rank 6a—Melee Synergy: Increase melee damage bonus by 30%; increase power damage by 30% for 20 seconds after an enemy is killed by heavy melee

Rank 6b—Fitness Expert: Increase health and shield bonuses by 25%

Analysis

Since all six classes for Commander Shepard share similar passive Fitness power, we're including an overview of this power here, rather than in every class section.

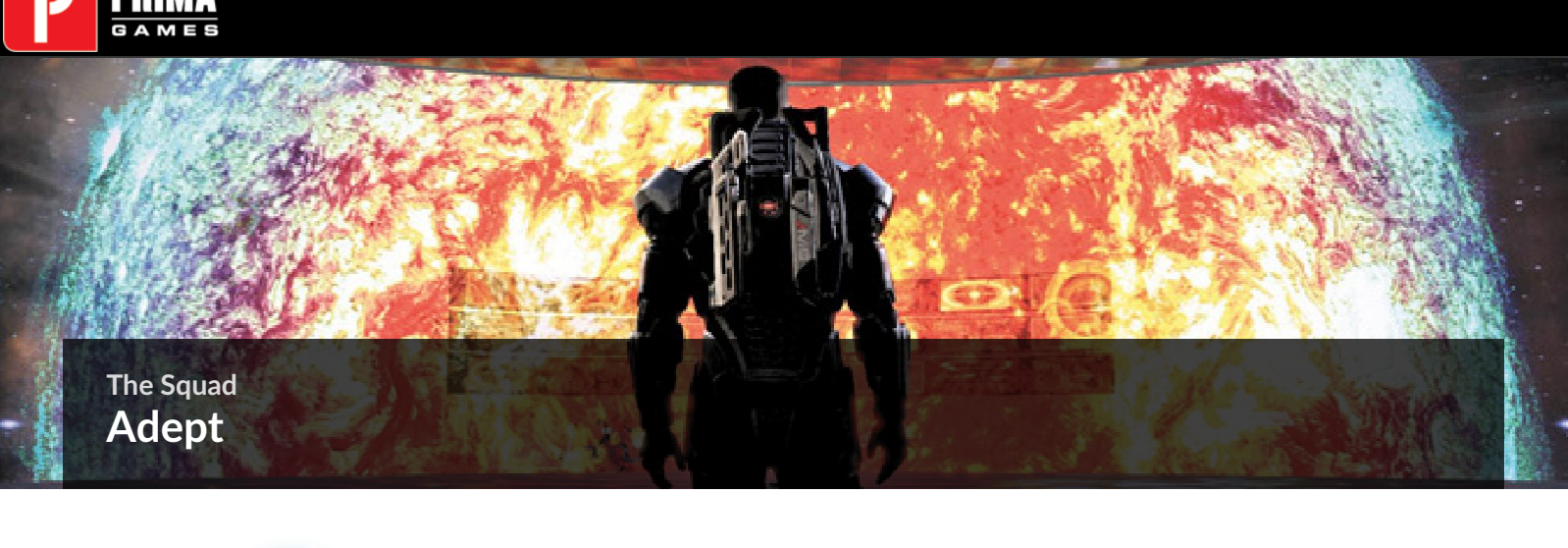
The Fitness power grants all versions of Shepard a general health and shield/barrier increase.

Additionally, at upgrade ranks (Ranks 4 through 6), you can add melee increases.

While these upgrades may only appeal to players who will use Commander Shepard in close-quarter combat, consider selecting at least one of the three melee upgrades for added melee damage potential.

However, the bonuses for Fitness are not the same for each class. For Rank 6a, some classes get weapon damage, some get power damage, the Sentinel gets increased damage reduction, and the Vanguard gets a bonus to Biotic Charge.

The sentinel has a unique bonus for Rank 5a. The Engineer gets a unique bonus for Rank 6b. In the end, make your rank upgrade choices based on the type of build you'd like to create.



Adept

Adepts are Biotic specialists, capable of disabling and killing enemies with raw Biotic power. They are outfitted with L5x implants that can spawn a micro-singularity, damaging enemies and pulling them into the air.

In battle, Adepts are strong, capable, power-heavy warriors with a talent for power combinations. Regardless of what kind of Adept build you eventually become, be sure to invest in Singularity.

Every Adept player can benefit from this power, even at its most basic. But when upgraded fully, Singularity is a benefit to every squad.

It is one of the few powers that can serve as a source power, inflict damage, and disrupt enemies in battle. This power should be the base of all Adept builds.

In order to keep your powers charged and ready to fire at a high rate, keep your weapon loadout low.

Select one or two weapons at most (like an SMG and pistol) to keep your loadout weight low, and keep your power recharge speed as close to 200 percent as possible.

POWERS

Singularity

Create a sphere of dark energy that traps and dangles enemies caught in its field.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 4.5 sec.; Duration: 4 sec.; Radius: 1.5 meters
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Duration and Radius: Increase Singularity's hold duration and impact radius by 20%
Rank 4a—Duration: Increase Singularity's hold duration by 30%. Additional enemies can be lifted before Singularity fades.
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 25%
Rank 5a—Lift Damage: Inflict 20 damage per second to lifted targets
Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 30%
Rank 6a—Expand: Expand the Singularity field by 35% for 10 seconds
Rank 6b—Detonate: Detonate Singularity when the field dies to inflict 300 damage across 5 meters

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Singularity may be an Adept's greatest power.

This lasting effect can be used to flush out enemies from behind cover and lift them into the air (when upgraded properly), rendering them helpless, and it can even function as a source power to create explosive power combinations.

At Rank 3, a single foe can be rendered harmless for up to nearly 5 seconds. Better still, that's nearly 5 seconds that Singularity can serve as a source power.

Even though you can stop at Rank 3 and have a significantly useful power, consider upgrading beyond this rank. Singularity should be a part of every Adept build.

Rank 4 Analysis

Rank 4 offers two very useful potential upgrades. Either increase the length of Singularity's duration and keep enemies suspended in the air longer (Rank 4a) or widen its reach by increasing its radius (Rank 4b).

Both are worthwhile upgrades, but Rank 4a is slightly more useful since it will allow you to pick up even more enemies with a single blast. Upgrade to Rank 4 and unleash a Singularity blast near a crowded area to create a bottleneck for attackers.

Even if you don't manage to get multiple enemies in the blast, other enemies will be forced to reroute since the upgraded Singularity will last longer.

Rank 5 Analysis

If you plan on using Singularity often, perhaps to create multiple explosive power combinations, then select Rank 5b. This will increase Singularity's recharge speed and decrease your waiting time between blasts to less than 6 seconds.

That means that you could potentially catch enemies in a massive explosion every 6 seconds. If you want to focus on inflicting damage, then select Rank 6a. This will add 20 points of damage per second for the duration of Singularity.

If you chose Rank 4a, then that's an extra 120 points of damage.

Rank 6 Analysis

At Rank 6, you can expand the Singularity's field by 35 percent for 10 seconds. If you've chosen upgrade Rank 4b, then your Singularity field will be 2.18 meters around. Rank 6a will expand on those 2.18 meters by 35 percent for 10 seconds.

By making Singularity last longer and reach farther, you can create countless problems for groups of enemies. Your other option at Rank 6 is to detonate Singularity when the field dies, inflicting 300 extra points of damage across 5 meters.

Not only does this remove the need for a detonator power to be added in order to detonate Singularity, but it also reaches farther and causes a decent amount of damage.

If you chose Rank 5a, then you could potentially inflict up to 420 damage with one Singularity blast.

Warp

Rip your enemy apart at a molecular level. Stop targeted enemy from regenerating health. Weaken armor.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 8 sec.; Damage: 250; Duration: 10 sec.
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%
Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%
Rank 4b—Detonate: Increase force, damage, and impact radius of combo detonations by 50%
Rank 5a—Lasting Damage: Increase damage by 40%; increase duration by 60%
Rank 5b—Expose: Increase weapon damage taken by a target by 15%; increase power damage taken by 15% for 10 seconds
Rank 6a—Pierce: Increase damage to barriers and armor by 50%; weaken armored targets by an additional 25%
Rank 6b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 35%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Warp is a cruel and vicious power, perfect to use against Reapers and Cerberus foes alike. Even at low ranks it can deal 300 points of damage on an enemy for up to 10 seconds.

You can stop upgrading at Rank 3 and use Warp strictly as a source power for power combinations, but its potential value reaches far beyond that so consider making Warp one of your go-to skills.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can either increase damage (Rank 4a) up to 375 points of damage, a worthwhile investment, or you can augment your unique detonate ability (Rank 4b).

This benefit is gained only when using Warp as a source power and another power is used to detonate it. When it does, Rank 4b will increase all aspects of the detonation by 50 percent.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5a, Lasting Damage, increases both damage and duration of Warp, making it deadlier and longer lasting. It may not be fancy, but the selection amplifies two of Warp's three most important components.

If you plan on frequently using Warp as a stand-alone attack, then select Rank 5a. Expose, Rank 5b, increases both weapon and power damage to targets affected by Warp.

This is useful when you want to weaken enemies and allow your squadmates to inflict additional damage while your powers recharge.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final upgrade tree in Warp either increases its recharge speed to maximum, lowering the recharge time to less than 8 seconds (Rank 6b), or increases its piercing ability to weaken barriers and armor and armored targets (Rank 6a).

Like Rank 5b, the benefits of Rank 6a allow your squadmates to pour on additional damage to affected enemies.

TIP

The "weakens armored targets" only refers to targets with an armor bar, the yellow bar.

Throw

Toss your enemy through the air with this Biotic blast.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 4 sec.; Force: 600 Newtons
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Force: Increase force by 30%
Rank 4a—Force: Increase force by 40%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 2 meters
Rank 5a—Detonate: Increase force and damage of Biotic detonations by 50%
Rank 5b—Recharge Combo: Reset recharge time after a Biotic combo detonates
Rank 6a—Double Throw: Launch two Throw projectiles to seek two targets instead of one
Rank 6b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

In the hands of a powerful adept, Throw is a very useful skill. With a single blast, you can rid yourself of pesky foes and clear a path in battle for squadmates.

At Rank 3, your blast of 780 Newtons hurls foes even farther, so consider upgrading to Rank 3, even if you don't plan on using this often.

Also, if you don't upgrade this power beyond Rank 3, keep it in your arsenal anyway; its function as a detonator power can complement nearly any squad composition with source powers.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can gain a simple force or radius increase. Rank 4a, Force, increases the amount of force exerted by each Throw blast to 1,020 Newtons.

This has the added ability of knocking foes into other enemies and disrupting enemy attacks. Rank 4b, Radius, increases the impact of radius by 2 meters, allowing you to hit more than one enemy per Throw blast.

This is especially useful in narrow corridors or battlefields where enemies bunch together into smaller groups.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5 you can increase the volatility of your Throw power (Rank 5a) or grant yourself the ability to create even more explosive combos (Rank 5b). Select Rank 5a if you want to use Throw as a damage-dealing detonator for source powers.

In fact, as an Adept, you can create your own Biotic explosions using Singularity as a source power. If you want to create these explosive combos, then select Rank 5a.

However, Rank 5b can also help if you have several squadmates who can launch source powers.

By frequently using your Throw as a detonator power, you can maximize Throw's potential for damage output, not just enemy disruption.

Rank 6 Analysis

At Rank 6, you can either increase the amount of Throw projectiles to seek two targets (Rank 6a) or increase Throw's recharge speed by 50 percent (Rank 6b).

If you plan on using Throw as an area-clearing disruptive power, then select Rank 6a.

The extra Throw projectile will help clear more enemies efficiently. If you plan on using Throw as a detonator power, then select Rank 6b; that way you can detonate any source powers set up by your squadmates.

Shockwave

Topple a row of enemies with this cascading shock wave.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 8 sec.; Damage: 200; Force: 600 Newtons; Radius: 2 meters; Range: 7 meters
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 20%
Rank 3—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 20%
Rank 4a—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 30%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 35%
Rank 5a—Detonate: Increase force and damage of Biotic detonations by 50%
Rank 5b—Reach: Increase the distance that Shockwave cascades by 50%
Rank 6a—Recharge Speed: Increases recharge speed by 35%
Rank 6b—Lifting Shockwave: Suspends targets in the air for a short time

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Shockwave is another disruptive ability in an Adept's arsenal. Like throw, it can hurl enemies out of the way and clear a path forward. Unlike Throw, however, this power doesn't stop at affecting one or two enemies.

It also does not travel around objects or other enemies. Shockwave travels in a straight line and for a long distance, affecting all enemies in its path.

This makes it a particularly useful power for Adepts who want to focus on disruption rather than destruction.

Of course, Shockwave is also a detonator power, so it can also be used to trigger explosive combos.

Rank 4 Analysis

Like most other powers, you can either select to increase its force and damage (Rank 4a) to inflict more damage on enemies and hurl them farther, or you can increase its radius (Rank 5b), allowing each Shockwave to reach more enemies.

The choice should be made depending on whether you want to cause more damage or disrupt more enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

If you select Rank 5a, you can increase the force and damage of Biotic combinations when using Shockwave as a detonator power. Select this if you plan to use Shockwave as part of explosive Biotic combos.

If you want to use Shockwave as only a disruptive ability, then select Rank 5b. This will let the Shockwave travel farther before it dissipates.

Rank 6 Analysis

At Rank 6a, you can increase the recharge speed of Shockwave in order to use it more frequently. At Rank 6b, you can add an additional "lift" ability to raise affected foes off the ground for a short time.

While this may not seem like a big deal, it will help combo off power upgrades like Singularity's Rank 5a, which adds lift damage to lifted enemies.

Pull

Yank an opponent helplessly off the ground.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 4 sec.; Duration: 4 sec.
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Duration: Increase duration by 40%
Rank 4a—Duration: Increase duration by 60%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 2 meters
Rank 5a—Lift Damage: Inflict 20 damage per second to lifted targets
Rank 5b—Expose: Increase all damage to targets lifted by Pull by 25%
Rank 6a—Double Pull: Launch two Pull projectiles to seek two targets instead of one
Rank 6b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Perhaps one of the Adept's most unique powers, Pull can yank enemies closer to you. This can be extremely effective for Adepts who want to focus on close-quarter combat or disrupting enemies.

At Rank 3, there won't be much use for Pull outside of disrupting enemy movement.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can increase the duration of Pull to knock enemies off balance for 60 percent longer (Rank 4a) or use its radius to affect more enemies nearby (Rank 4b).

If you want to focus on enemy disruption, then select Rank 4b. The ability to affect more enemies can help your squad in nearly any combat situation.

However, increasing the duration of the Pull effect will grant you more time to use Pull as a source power and trigger more explosive Biotic combos.

Rank 5 Analysis

Adepts have the unique ability to disrupt, and then destroy enemies. Since a lot of their powers affect lifted targets, Adepts can use these power combinations to lift enemies off the ground, then inflict damage on them as they dangle helplessly.

Rank 5a will allow enemies lifted by powers like Singularity or even Shockwave (Rank 6b) to take 20 points of damage for however long they're in the air. Rank 5b will increase damage to affected enemies by 25 percent.

So even if they're not in the air, they can still take extra damage with ammo powers or other types of attacks.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Throw, Pull also has an upgrade option that allows you to affect two targets rather than one. Select Rank 6a to increase the disruptive abilities of Pull. After all, more enemies off balance means less enemies that can attack.

Alternatively, if you want to use Pull more frequently on the battlefield, select Rank 6b. The increased recharge speed will lower the amount of time it takes before you can launch it again.

Cluster Grenade (Unique)

Lob this Biotic grenade cluster at your enemies and watch them fly.

Rank 1—Damage Per Second: 250; Force: 1,000 Newtons; Radius: 3 meters
Rank 2—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 1
Rank 3—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 20%
Rank 4a—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 30%
Rank 4b–Radius: Increase impact radius by 35%
Rank 5a—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 2
Rank 5b—Damage Combo: Increase damage to already-lifted targets by 100%
Rank 6a—Shrapnel: Increases shrapnel count by 2
Rank 6b—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Cluster Grenades are useful in nearly all combat situations. At Ranks 1 through 3, a well-aimed grenade can serve as a great medium- to long-range weapon. Hurl it ahead of you and inflict damage on unsuspecting foes.

These grenades don't just explode like typical frag grenades; they burst into smaller clusters of explosions that also deal Biotic damage while covering a larger radius than typical grenades.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can choose to increase either the force and damage output or the damage radius. If you want to concentrate on dishing out maximum damage, choose Rank 4a.

Not only will this inflict more damage, but also its increased force will hurl enemies farther. Rank 4b will increase the impact radius of your grenades and their cluster bombs, allowing you to damage more enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5 allows you to either increase the amount of grenades you can carry or increase the damage dealt to lifted enemies by 100 percent. For players who want to be offensive powerhouses, consider carrying more grenades.

Rank 5a will ensure that you always have plenty of grenades for nearly all combat scenarios. Rank option 5b can also help maximize damage to targets.

Another one of the Adept's "lift" combos, Rank 5b's damage increase to lifted targets can stack on top of other "lift" damage bonuses.

Rank 6 Analysis

At Cluster Grenade's maximum rank, players can either increase force and damage (Rank 6b) or increase shrapnel effects (Rank 6a).

Both options are worthwhile upgrades, so decide on whether you want to focus on enemy disruption or secondary damage through shrapnel.

Biotic Mastery (Unique)

Be an expert tactician on and off the battlefield. Faster and stronger Biotic powers. More dexterity. More charisma.

Rank 1—Reputation Bonus: 4%: Power Damage Bonus: 10%; Weight Capacity Bonus: 10
Rank 2—Influence and Capacity: Increase weight capacity bonus by 20 points; increase reputation bonus by 4%
Rank 3—Influence and Damage: Increase damage and force bonuses by 10%; increase reputation bonus by 4%
Rank 4a—Damage and Force: Increase damage and force bonuses by 15%
Rank 4b—Influence and Duration: Increase duration of all powers by 25%; increase reputation bonus by 8%
Rank 5a—Squad Bonus: Increase the force and damage of squadmate powers by 30%
Rank 5b—Damage and Capacity: Increase power damage bonus by 10%; increase weight capacity bonus by 20 points
Rank 6a—Combo Mastery: Increase recharge speed of all powers by 30% for 20 seconds when detonating Biotic combos
Rank 6b—Power Mastery: Increase damage and force bonuses and power duration by 25%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

The Biotic Mastery passive power can be upgraded to benefit any number of varied Adept builds. Upgrade to at least Rank 3 if you want to increase your weight capacity and allow your Adept build to carry heavier weapons like shotguns or assault rifles.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you must choose whether you'll focus on damage and force (Rank 4a), or influence and duration (Rank 4b). If you select Rank 4a, Damage and Force, powers like Singularity and Shockwave become all the more destructive.

Their effects will inflict more damage and hurl enemies farther away. Rank 4b allows you to increase the duration of all powers, including Singularity attacks. Select Rank 4b to keep foes sustained in your powers' effects longer.

Singularity and other powers with lift effects will last longer, allowing you to use them as source powers.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5a will increase the force and damage of your squad's powers. This is helpful if you want your teammates to use their powers in combination with yours.

While this rank upgrade won't benefit you directly, the added power damage from your squad will help when your powers have weakened enemy forces or affected them with lift effects.

Select Rank 5b to increase power damage and weight capacity. This will help increase your power recharge speed and damage, making skills like Shockwave and Warp all the more lethal.

Rank 6 Analysis

For Adepts who want to focus on power combinations, select Rank 6a. Combo Mastery will increase the recharge speed of all powers when detonating Biotic combos.

This upgrade option will allow you to become a Biotic combo expert.

Use power combinations like Singularity and Warp or Shockwave to unleash destructive Biotic combos, and Rank 6a will increase the speed at which those powers will recharge for 20 seconds.

Alternatively, if you don't plan on executing Biotic power combinations by yourself, then select Rank 6b, Power Mastery. This will increase all of your powers' destructive capabilities.

BUILDS

Disrupt and Destroy

Husk
3
324
30

Assault Trooper
90
22

Assault Trooper
90
22

With skills like Singularity, Throw, Pull, and Shockwave, an Adept can effectively disrupt enemy movement by knocking them off balance and lifting them into the air.

Once in the air, enemies are vulnerable to the squad's attacks and to all of the Adept's powers, which can increase in damage when applied to enemies in midair.

By using these types of powers in conjunction with one another, you can first disrupt the enemy's movements, then inflict damage while they're incapacitated.

Damage and Biotic Combos

Husk
3
324
18

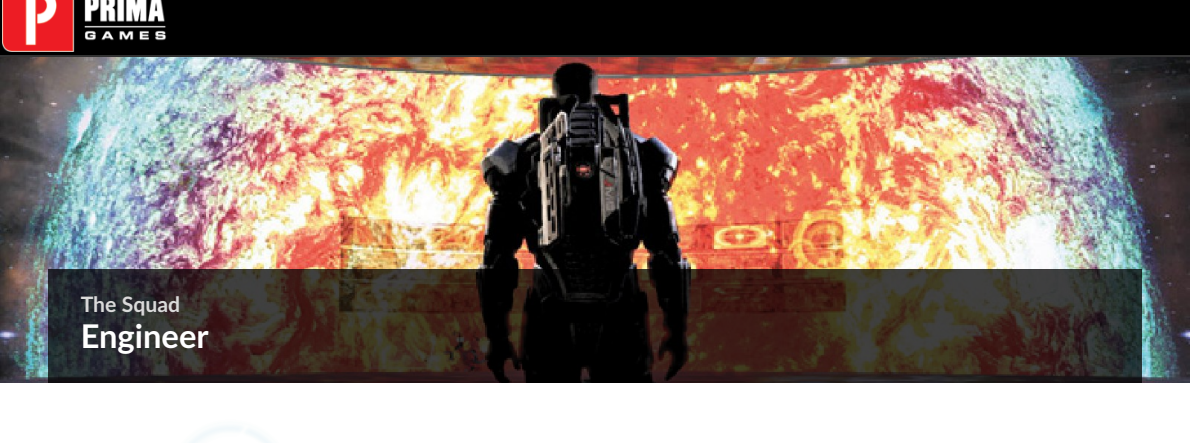
Disruptive effects aside, an Adept's powers can also inflict a great deal of damage when used properly. Adept players who want to focus on damage-dealing should structure their power upgrades to maximize Biotic power combinations.

Begin by investing in your most effective source power, Singularity. With Singularity as your base, structure the rest of your power upgrades to maximize combo power and effects.

When you do, you'll have little need for squad members using detonate powers and will be more than capable of unleashing Biotic combos at will.

You'll soon be the main damage-dealer in any squad you create, which will allow your two squadmates to focus on enemy disruption or other support roles.

Invest heavily in Warp, Singularity, and Cluster Grenades to create a damage-dealing Biotic combo expert.



The Squad

Engineer

Engineers are tech specialists, the most effective class at disabling the defenses of the toughest enemies or incapacitating them to render them harmless.

In combination with their weapons training, Engineers have the unique ability to spawn combat drones, which can harass enemies or force them out of entrenched covered positions.

Having an Engineer in the squad is like having an extra two, three, or even four people fighting alongside you. With their affinity for drones, turrets, and enemy AI hacking, Engineers can turn a lopsided situation into an advantage.

However, even Engineers who don't use additional units in battle can still wreak havoc on the battlefield.

Powers like Incinerate and Cryo Blast can inflict a decent amount of damage on all types of foes, but their ability to function as source powers makes Engineers a bonus to have in any squad.

Equip your Engineer with shotgun and pistol combinations if you don't plan on using powers very frequently in battle or in quick succession. Similarly, a light (low weight) assault rifle can help keep weight down to allow nearly any Engineer build be successful.

Tip

Pistols and SMGs are the lightest weapons. Assault rifles are midweight weapons, and shotguns and sniper rifles are generally the heaviest.

But there are exceptions to these rules in all weapon categories. Find a weapon loadout that is right for you.

POWERS

Incinerate

Burn your opponents and incinerate their armor. Heavy damage to health and armor. Make an enemy panic, stopping health regeneration.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 8 sec.; Damage: 300
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%.
Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%
Rank 4a–Damage: Increase damage by 30%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 2 meters
Rank 5a—Burning Damage: Increase damage by an additional 40% over 8 seconds
Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 6a—Freeze Combo: Increase damage to frozen and chilled targets by an additional 100%
Rank 6b—Armor Damage: Increase damage to armored targets by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Incinerate is a most destructive power. Because it can function as both a source and detonator power, it is always a good idea to upgrade this to at least Rank 3. Of course, it can also be used as a destructive, stand-alone power.

If that's your goal, don't stop upgrading at Rank 3. Even at Rank 1 it can be used to create explosive fire combinations, but always consider upgrading to Rank 3.

Rank 4 Analysis

To increase the damage output of Incinerate up to 450 points of damage, select Rank 4a. The 30 percent increase is substantial enough to take down lesser enemies while inflicting large amounts of damage on tougher foes.

Your other option is to increase the impact radius of Incinerate in order to scorch more enemies with every blast.

Your choice here should depend on whether you want to be a main damage-dealer or complement the rest of the squad by softening multiple enemies at once.

Rank 5 Analysis

Players hoping to maximize Incinerate's damage potential should invest in Rank 5a, Burning Damage. This upgrade increases the damage over time and burns enemies past the shot's initial impact.

When coupled with Incendiary Ammo or other detonator powers, this combination can lead to dazzling explosive results. Your other option at Rank 5 is to increase the recharge speed of Incinerate.

This will allow you to use Incinerate more often in battle and become a deadly weapon, especially in squads with Biotic specialists.

Rank 6 Analysis

Rank 6a increases damage to frozen and chilled targets by an additional 100 percent. So if you plan on using your other elemental power, Cryo Blast, select this rank upgrade to benefit from cross-power upgrade bonuses.

If you don't frequently use those freezing skills, then don't waste precious upgrade points on Rank 6a. Instead, use those points on Rank 6b and gain a very useful damage increase to armored targets.

Overload

Overload electronics with this power surge, stunning your enemy. Effective against shields, barriers, and synthetics. Not as effective against organics.

Rank 1—Overload: Recharge Speed: 8 sec.; Damage: 220
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%
Rank 4a—Chain Overload: Hit 1 additional target within 8 meters with 60% less damage
Rank 4b—Damage: Increase damage by 30%
Rank 5a—Neural Shock: Incapacitate weaker organic enemies for a short duration
Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 6a—Chain Overload: Increase damage by 15%. Hit 1 additional target within 8 meters with 60% less damage.
Rank 6b—Shield Damage: Increase damage to barriers and shields by an additional 100%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

By far one of the most useful powers against synthetics, Overload can temporarily fry electrical equipment like turrets and can singe synthetic foes.

At Ranks 1 through 3, you gain a standard recharge speed and damage increase, so stop upgrading at Rank 3 if you don't plan on making Overload an integral part of your attack arsenal.

However, during missions where you encounter geth or other synthetic opponents, you can still prove to be very useful.

Rank 4 Analysis

If you do make Overload a more integral part of your attack arsenal, then consider upgrading to Rank 4a. This will increase the amount of targets you can affect by one.

So instead of overloading only one enemy at a time, you can stun multiple enemies with each Overload blast. Rank 4b is a standard damage increase. Select this if you want to focus on dealing more damage to individual enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you gain the option to stun organic foes as well as synthetics. The Neural Shock ability will expand your role across several missions since Overload power will no longer be effective against synthetic targets alone.

Rank 5b increases Overload's recharge speed, allowing you to use the skill more frequently in battle.

The trade-off between Ranks 5a and 5b are simple: If you want to use Overload against more varied types of enemies, select 5a. If you want to use it more frequently in battle to stun enemies en masse, select Rank 5b.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Rank 4a, Rank 6a will increase how many targets you can reach with an Overload blast by one and will increase the damage it inflicts by 15 percent.

The choice is simple: If you selected Rank 4a, make the same selection here and you can stun small groups of enemies with one Overload blast.

Not only will you incapacitate more enemies at once, but also you'll expend less power to do it. At Rank 6b, you can increase the damage dealt to barriers and shields, becoming extremely effective against all shielded foes.

Cryo Blast

Flash-freeze and shatter unprotected enemies. Slow down the rest. Weaken armor. Frozen targets won't regenerate health.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 4 sec.; Freeze Duration: 4 sec.; Movement Speed: –15%
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Improve recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Duration: Increase power duration by 40%
Rank 4a—Duration: Increase power duration by 60%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 2 meters
Rank 5a—Speed Reduction: Decrease movement speed of chilled targets by an additional 20%
Rank 5b—Cryo Explosion: Increase damage to chilled and frozen targets by 10%
Rank 6a—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 50%
Rank 6b—Frozen Vulnerability: Increase damage to frozen and chilled targets by 15%. Weaken armored targets by an additional 25%.

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

By upgrading Cryo Blast to Rank 3, you can increase the duration of freeze effects to nearly 6 seconds while decreasing the recharge speed for the power to 3.2 seconds.

That means that if you use Cryo Blast heavily, you can fire a blast nearly every few seconds and freeze enemies for about the same time.

So if you time things properly, you can theoretically keep a target frozen indefinitely until the rest of the squad can finish them off.

This skill also works as a "source" power for cryo explosions. Once affected by Cryo Blast, targets can then be detonated using a detonator power like Concussive Shot, Shockwave, or Incinerate.

Most importantly, if you plan on creating an Engineer who can deal damage using powers alone, invest heavily in Cryo Blast as well as Rank 6a of Incinerate.

Rank 4 Analysis

The main benefit of Cryo Blast is that you can slow enemies and potentially freeze them in place, removing them from the equation on the battlefield.

At Rank 4, you must choose whether to slow singular enemies for longer periods of time (great against larger, more powerful enemies) or to slow multiple enemies for less time.

Make your selection here based on whether you want to focus more on crowd control or damage output.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you can add an explosive effect to Cryo Blast with Rank 5b. Once the enemy is frozen or chilled, the cryo effects increase all damage to the enemy by 10 percent. If crowd control is your goal, select Rank 5a.

This slows down enemy movement by an additional 20 percent, making foes move 35 percent slower overall. When combined with Rank 4a, the decrease in movement speed makes for an overwhelming advantage on the battlefield.

Not only will foes move slower, but also they'll do so for nearly 7 seconds.

Rank 6 Analysis

Engineers who want to focus on using more powers over drones and sentries should select Rank 6a. This will increase the recharge speed for Cryo Blast and allow you to use it far more frequently on the battlefield.

This is best when trying to focus on crowd control. However, if you want to become an explosives specialist, select Rank 6b to increase the target's vulnerability.

When used in conjunction with Incinerate, you can obliterate enemies on the battlefield with ease.

Combat Drone

Deploy this attack drone to stun targets and draw enemy fire.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 5 sec.; Drone Damage: 40; Drone Shields: 500
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Shields and Damage: Increase drone's damage and shields by 30%
Rank 4a—Shields and Damage: Increase drone's damage and shields by 40%
Rank 4b—Detonate: Drone explodes when destroyed, dealing 156 points of damage across a 5-meter radius
Rank 5a—Shock: Upgrade drone's short-range attack to deal 130 points of damage across a 2.5-meter radius. Drone stuns enemies for a short duration.
Rank 5b—Shields and Damage: Increase drone's damage and shields by 50%
Rank 6a—Rockets: Upgrade drone with long-range rockets that deal 130 points of damage across a 1.5-meter radius
Rank 6b—Chain Lightning: Upgrade drone's electrical pulse to jump and hit 3 additional targets

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Combat Drone is one of the Engineer's most useful powers. With it you can summon a drone capable of distracting and destroying foes at higher ranks.

At Ranks 1 through 3, the combat drones won't inflict much damage on foes, but it will serve as a worthwhile complement to any squad.

After all, even though it won't dish out much damage, it will absorb up to 650 points of damage. That's 650 points of damage that you or your squadmates won't have to incur.

Rank 4 Analysis

Rank 4a increases the drone's damage output and shields, meaning it can inflict more damage while taking more damage.

This upgrade is worthwhile in all cases, whether you're using the combat drone as a defensive decoy or as a damage-dealing complement to your squad.

If you want to use the drone as more of an offensive weapon, then select Rank 4b. This adds a detonate ability to the drone to make it blow up when destroyed and inflict up to 156 more points of damage on foes up to 5 meters.

Rank 5 Analysis

Another upgrade to shields and damage, Rank 5b can maximize the drone's damage at 88 points per attack and an impressive 1,100 shields—that is, of course, only if you chose Rank 4a.

With 1,100 shields, the combat drone will sustain an impressive amount of damage and stay longer on the battlefield. Your other option is to add a Shock ability to the combat drone's arsenal.

With it, the drone will be able to deal even more damage (adding 170 points of damage) and stun foes for a short period of time.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final two upgrade options for the combat drone are both offensive abilities. Rank 6a adds rockets to a potentially already lethal weapon.

Each rocket will inflict 220 points of damage on top of the drone's base damage (or augmented damage if you upgraded Rank 4a and 5b).

This is another useful upgrade for players who want to become a drone/damage-dealing specialist since the rocket upgrades range is considerably higher than the drone's other attacks.

If you're going to also invest in your Sentry Turret power, then consider upgrading Rank 6a. Otherwise, select Rank 6b. With it, your drone will be able to jump and hit three additional targets, allowing for better crowd control.

Sabotage

Sabotage weapons and hack synthetics. Compromised synthetics fight on your side. Affected weapons overheat.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 8 sec.; Hack Duration: 12 sec.; Radius: 12 meters; Backfire: 150
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Radius: Increase impact radius by 30%
Rank 4a—Duration: Increase power duration by 50%
Rank 4b—Backfire: Increase damage taken by 30% when enemy weapons overheat
Rank 5a—Explosive Hack: Synthetics explode when destroyed, dealing 120 points of damage across a 3-meter radius
Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 6a—Berserk: Hacked synthetics fighting on your side move faster and do 100% more damage.
Rank 6b—Tech Vulnerability: Increase all Tech power damage done to target by 100% for 10 seconds

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Sabotage is a useful skill whenever facing synthetic life-forms like the geth, Cerberus Engineer turrets, and Cerberus Atlas mechs.

With it, you can overwrite their programming and turn enemies into allies. While this is already extremely effective in evening things out, the added explosive backfire can also help dwindle enemy numbers.

At Rank 3, Sabotage can impact enemies within a 3.25-meter radius and hack them for 12 seconds.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can choose to either increase how long enemies remain hacked (Rank 4a) or how much damage they cause enemies when their weapons explode (Rank 4b). Make your selection here based on your eventual role in combat.

If you want to be a crowd-controlling Tech maven, select Rank 4a. This will keep the drones in the field longer and allow you to control your foes.

If you want to concentrate on damage-dealing, then select Rank 4b, Backfire. This will increase the amount of damage enemies sustain to 195 points of damage.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5 has two more upgrades similar to Rank 4. Choose Rank 5b to increase Sabotage's recharge speed. By doing so, Sabotage will be ready for use in under 11 seconds.

This may seem like a long time, but when the effect lasts 12 seconds, the benefits are clear: You'll be ready to launch another Sabotage attack before the first one completely wears off.

If you choose Rank 5a, then the Sabotage will gain an explosive hack upgrade. Affected synthetics will explode at the end of the hack and inflict an additional 120 points of damage to enemies within a 3-meter radius.

If you want to concentrate on dealing damage, select Rank 5a—the added damage is worthwhile.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final upgrade selection for Sabotage can either bolster your hacked allies (Rank 6a) or increase all Tech damage done to the affected enemy for 10 seconds (Rank 6b).

If you want to use all hacked enemies as long as possible and turn them on their comrades, then select Berserk (Rank 6a). This will turn hacked foes into formidable allies.

Otherwise, select Rank 6b, Tech Vulnerability, to increase the amount of damage you can inflict. This is best for players who don't want to bother with crowd control and instead want to focus on damage-dealing.

Sentry Turret (Unique)

Deploy this heavy-weapon turret for cover fire.

Rank 1 Recharge Speed: 5 sec.; Turret Damage: 25 sec.; Turret Shields: 500
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Shields and Damage: Increase turret's shields and damage by 30%
Rank 4a—Shields and Damage: Increase turret's shields and damage by 40%
Rank 4b—Shock: Upgrade turret with shock attack to stun enemies
Rank 5a—Cryo Ammo: Upgrade turret with Cryo Ammo, giving it a chance to freeze enemies for 3 seconds
Rank 5b—Armor-Piercing Ammo: Upgrade turret with armor-piercing ammo, giving it 100% damage bonus against armor
Rank 6a—Rockets: Upgrade turret with long-range rockets that deal 130 points of damage across a 1.5-meter radius
Rank 6b—Flamethrower: Upgrade turret with a close-range flamethrower that deals 71.5 points of damage per second

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Aside from the combat drone, the Sentry Turret is one of the Engineer's most valuable power.

Like the combat drone, the Sentry Turret can serve as a secondary damage-dealing weapon, one capable of inflicting damage while simultaneously distracting foes.

Where the combat drone moves around the battlefield, the Sentry Turret stations itself wherever you deploy it. Luckily, its damage output more than makes up for its lack of mobility. Tacticians can use the Sentry Turret to either pin down enemies or divert them around the battlefield.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can either increase the shield and damage output for your turret (Rank 4a) or add a shock ability to stun foes.

This function works exactly as it does with the combat drone, so if you want to focus on crowd control and have selected it for your combat drone as well, then do so now.

The added shock attacks will be very helpful when both the combat drone and the Sentry Turrets are deployed.

If you feel comfortable with only one Shock upgrade (on your Combat Drone), then select Rank 4a. The added damage for your Sentry Turret will make it a formidable ally on the battlefield.

Rank 5 Analysis

An added ammo upgrade can prove very useful in battle. If you don't want to invest in Cryo Blast, consider selecting Rank 5a.

If the Cryo Ammo manages to freeze a target, then follow up with Incinerate (especially if it has been upgraded to Rank 6a) and shatter your foes.

If you want to gain a substantial advantage over armored foes, and you've invested in Cryo Blast, then select Rank 5b.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final rank upgrade depends on whether you want to use the Sentry Turret in close- or long-range combat. The rockets upgrade of Rank 6a allow you to obliterate enemies from afar.

Select this upgrade to use your Sentry Turret to whittle down foes as they approach, usually as the turret is deployed near you. To pin enemies down before they can attack, select Rank 6b to gain a powerful flamethrower ability.

With it, you can keep the turret away from you and allow the flamethrower to inflict damage at close range. This will force your foes to engage the turret and keep a distance from you.

Tech Mastery (Unique)

Be an expert tactician on and off the battlefield. Faster and stronger Tech powers. More dexterity. More charisma.

Rank 1—Reputation Bonus: 4%; Power Damage Bonus: 10%; Weight Capacity Bonus: 10
Rank 2—Influence and Capacity: Increase weight capacity bonus by 20 points. Increase reputation bonus by 4%
Rank 3—Influence and Damage: Increase power damage bonus by 10%; increase reputation bonus by 4%
Rank 4a—Power Damage: Increase power damage bonus by 15%
Rank 4b—Duration: Increase duration of all powers by 25%; increase reputation bonus by 8%
Rank 5a—Squad Bonus: Increase the force and damage of squadmate powers by 30%
Rank 5b—Damage and Capacity: Increase power damage bonus by 10%; increase weight capacity bonus by 20 points
Rank 6a—Drone Mastery: Increase combat drone's and Sentry Turret's shields by 100%; increase combat drone's and Sentry Turret's damage by 50%
Rank 6b—Power Mastery: Increase power damage and duration by 25

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

The Tech Mastery passive power can be upgraded to benefit any number of varied Engineer builds. However, at Rank 3, the reputation, power damage, and weight capacity bonuses can benefit any Engineer.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you must choose whether you'll focus on power-damage or drone/sentry damage. It you select Rank 4a, Power Damage, powers like Incinerate and Cryo Blast will become all the more destructive.

At Rank 4b, you can increase the duration of all powers, including Combat Drones, Sentry Turrets, and Sabotage attacks. Select Rank 4b to keep your one-man army on the field longer.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5a will grant your squad a bonus, increasing the force and damage of their powers. This is helpful if you want your teammates to use their powers in combination with yours.

While this rank upgrade won't benefit you directly, the added power damage from your squad will help when your drones have weakened enemy forces.

Select Rank 5b to increase power damage and weight capacity. This will help increase your power recharge speed and damage, making skills like Incinerate all the more lethal.

Rank 6 Analysis

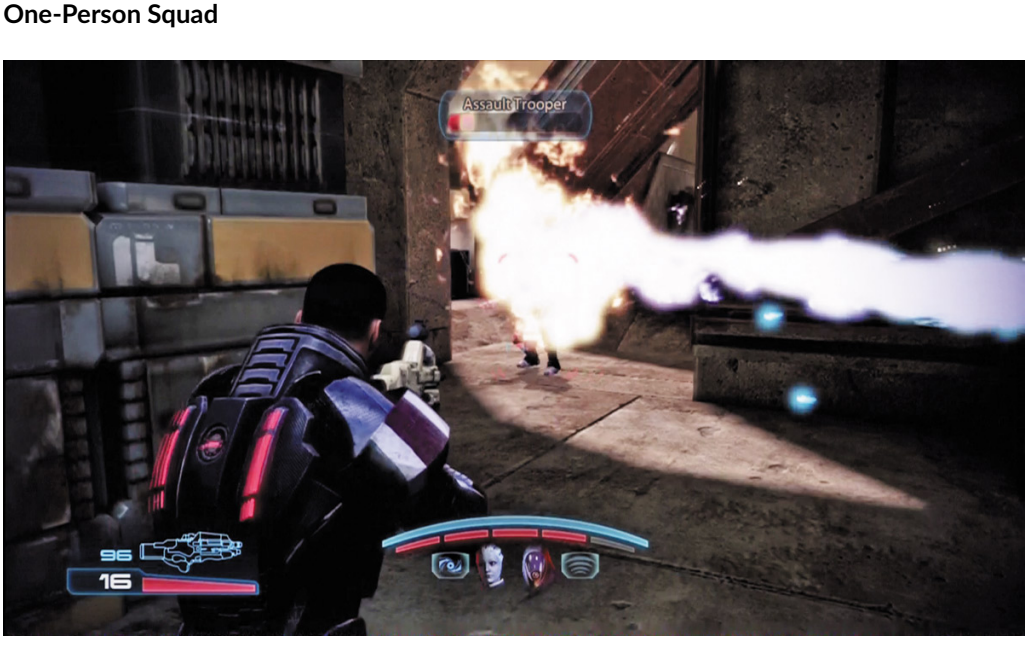
For Engineers who want to focus on drones and sentries usage, select Rank 6a. Drone Mastery will increase the effectiveness of both the drone and the sentry's shields and damage significantly.

With this upgrade, you can maximize the amount of damage your damage-dealing manifestations can inflict and sustain. If you want to focus more on using powers like Incinerate and Cryo Blast, select Rank 6b instead.

The bonus to damage and duration will allow your squad to combo more effectively when you unleash your elemental powers.

BUILDS

One-Person Squad



Combat Engineer
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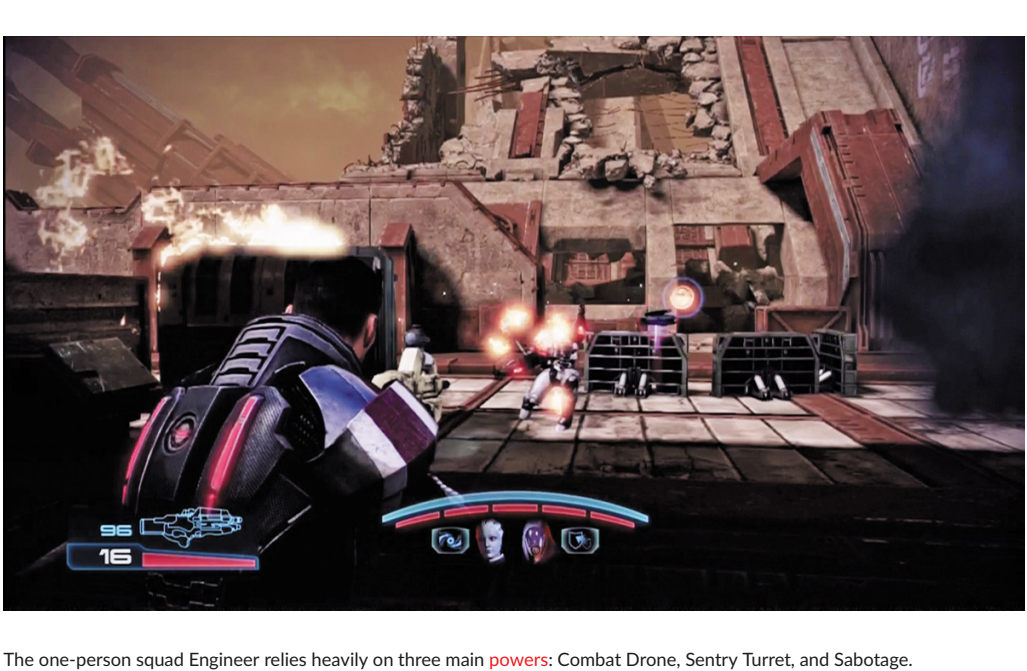


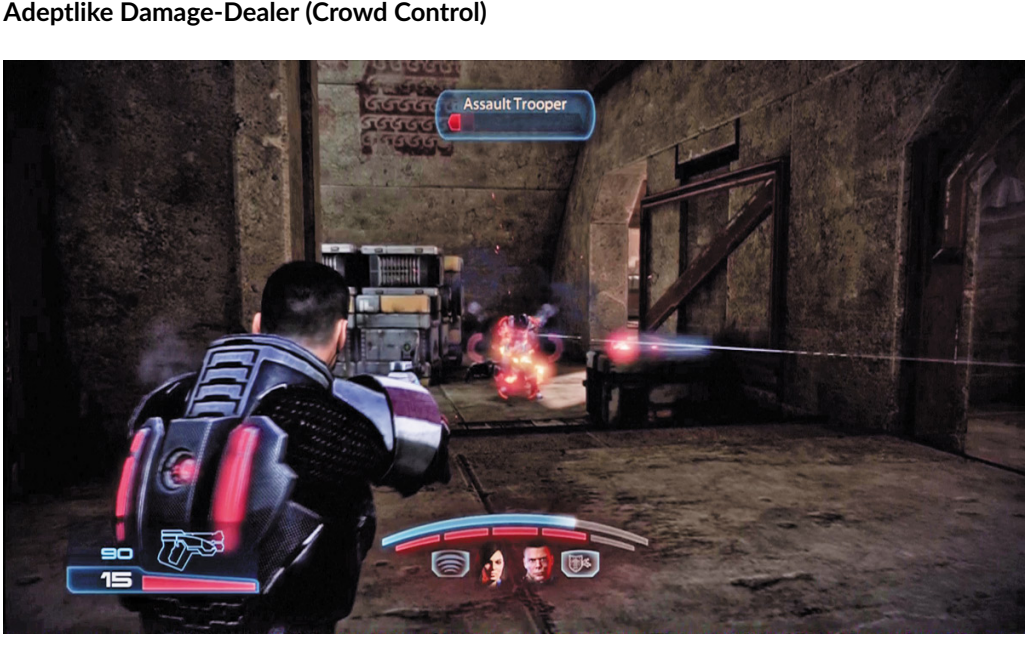
The one-person squad Engineer relies heavily on three main powers: Combat Drone, Sentry Turret, and Sabotage.

With these three power combinations, you can unleash additional damage-dealing units into the field to inflict damage, distract foes, and create tactical nightmares for the opposition.

Additionally, when using Sabotage on synthetic enemies, a talented Engineer can also turn mechanical foes into friends, increasing the number of fighters on the squad even more.

There are few things as impressive as walking into battle while a turret scorches foes up close, a combat drone unleashes rockets from afar, and an unsuspecting geth turns on its own squad to fight for you.

Adeptlike Damage-Dealer (Crowd Control)

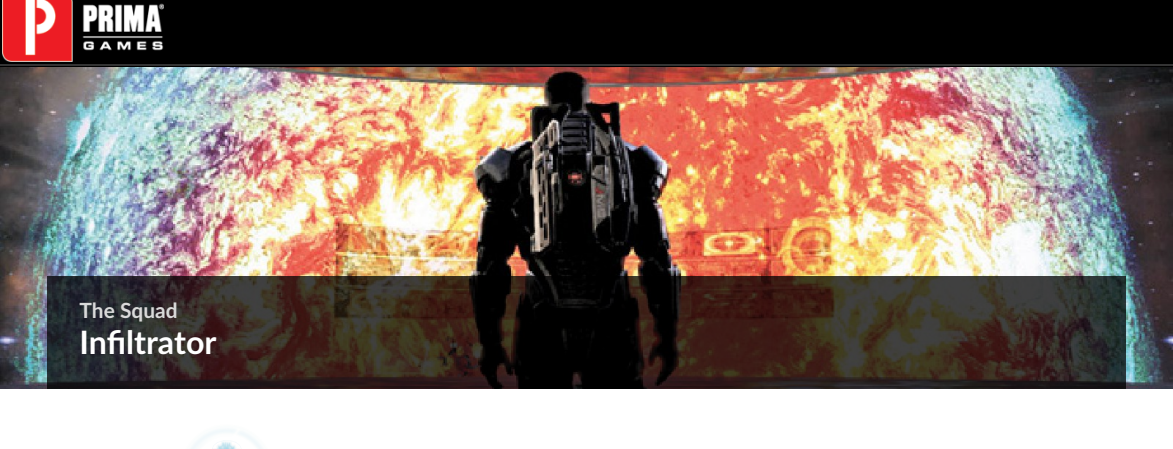


Assault Trooper
90
15

If increasing your numbers isn't a battle tactic you want to employ, then focus on using destructive and disruptive powers instead. Invest upgrade points in powers like Overload, Incinerate, and Cryo Blast.

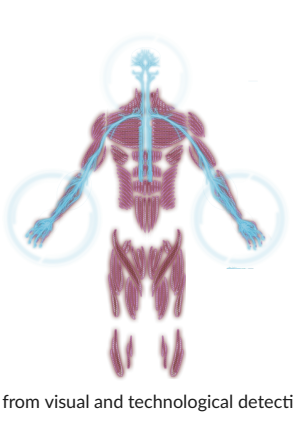
With these powers, you'll be able to create multiple explosive power combinations. Upgrade Incinerate to Rank 6a and you'll be able to maximize the effectiveness of Cryo Blast as well, since you'll be able to slow enemies, then detonate them in magnificent explosions.

If you don't want to focus on power damage, use your three powers to slow and disrupt enemies in a crowd-control capacity.



The Squad

Infiltrator



Infiltrators are Tech and combat specialists with the unique ability to cloak themselves from visual and technological detection.

Their inventory is stacked with a wide variety of weapons, equipment, and powers.

Infiltrators are deadly at any range, but particularly so with a sniper rifle.

When scoping a target, superior reflexes take over, time momentarily slows down, and enemies are easy pickings.

Depending on your play style, you can build an Infiltrator to stay as far away from the action as possible, picking off enemies with sniper tactics before your squad leads the charge into battle.

Alternatively, Infiltrators can also specialize in close-range combat, dealing major damage with shotguns and augmented melee attacks.

The key to both types of attacks, however, is expert use of the Tactical Cloak. This should be the base of every Infiltrator build.

An Infiltrator has an inherent talent when scoping in on enemies with a sniper rifle, so pair a sniper rifle with another light weapon, such as an SMG, so as to maximize the recharge speed for all powers.

However, should you select a different approach for your Infiltrator, consider pairing a shotgun with a pistol. The weight won't be too heavy, but you'll have a decent balance of accuracy, damage, and range.

POWERS

Disruptor Ammo

Bring down your enemy's barriers and shields. Chance to stun. More weapon damage. More damage to shields and barriers.

Rank 1—Health Damage Bonus: +5%; Shield and Barrier Damage: +20%
Rank 2—Stun: Improve the odds of stunning a target by 15%
Rank 3—Damage: Increase health damage bonus by 2%; increase shield and barrier damage bonuses by 8%
Rank 4a—Damage: Increase health damage bonus by 3%; increase shield and barrier damage bonuses by 12%
Rank 4b—Squad Bonus: Squadmates gain Disruptor Ammo at 50% effectiveness
Rank 5a—Ammo Capacity: Increase ammo capacity by 30%
Rank 5b—Headshot: Increase headshot damage by 25%
Rank 6a—Damage: Increase health damage bonus by 5%; increase shield and barrier damage bonuses by 20%
Rank 6b—Stun: Improve the odds of stunning a target by 25%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Disruptor Ammo is a great power for a damage-dealer because it makes all weapon fire even more lethal. With Disruptor Ammo (or any Ammo power, in fact), it's best to activate it before every mission and make sure you keep it active at all times.

When active, it adds the ability to stun foes and incapacitate them before they can attack. It also functions as a "source" power that can be detonated using other powers like Incinerate.

For an Infiltrator, Disruptor ammo can prove to be very effective in softening up foes before switching to Tactical Cloak and taking down the stunned foe stealthily.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, Disruptor Ammo can either increase damage to health and shield/barriers (4a), or you can gain the ability to automatically grant it to all squadmates when active (4b).

The choice really breaks down to whether you want to dish out as much damage as you can or whether you want to stalk stunned enemies on the battlefield.

By granting your squadmates the use of your Disruptor Ammo, you'll increase the number of enemies that are stunned on the battlefield. This will make it easier to sneak up behind them and finish them off.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5 you can select to either carry 30 percent more ammunition or to increase headshot damage by 25 percent. To make the best use of this selection, take into account what type of Infiltrator you're building.

Infiltrators excel at using sniper rifles, so Rank 5b should be an obvious choice if you plan on taking advantage of that trait.

However, if you plan on being a close-quarters assassin who prefers a shotgun and melee to the sniper rifle, then select Rank 5a. The added ammunition count will help, especially with shotguns that tend to carry low ammo.

Rank 6 Analysis

Both options in Rank 6 increase Disruptor Ammo's damage output. However, Rank 6a increases damage to health, barriers, and shields, depending on the enemy.

This makes all shots with Disruptor Ammo all the more powerful since it's a good general increase to overall damage. Rank 6b adds an entirely new effect to shots taken using Disruptor Ammo.

Instead of simply dealing more damage to health, shields, and barriers, it stuns enemies and incapacitates them, allowing your team to take out vulnerable, stunned foes.

Your Rank 6 option should depend on whether you want to take down enemies one at a time, or if you want to incapacitate enemies before activating Tactical Cloak and sneaking up to kill them.

Cryo Ammo

Flash-freeze and shatter unprotected enemies. Slow down the rest. Weaken armor. Frozen targets won't regenerate health.

Rank 1—Freeze Duration: 3 sec.; Movement Speed: −15%; Armor Weakening: -25%
Rank 2—Freeze Chance: Improve the odds of freezing a target by 30%
Rank 3—Freeze Duration: Increase freeze duration by 40%
Rank 4a—Freeze Duration: Increase freeze duration by 40%
Rank 4b—Squad Bonus: Squadmates gain Cryo Ammo at 50% effectiveness
Rank 5a—Ammo Capacity: Increase ammo capacity by 30%
Rank 5b—Headshot: Increase headshot damage by 35%
Rank 6a—Freeze Chance: Improve the odds of freezing a target by 50%; decrease a frozen target's movement speed by an additional 20%
Rank 6b—Damage Combo: Increase damage to frozen targets from all sources by 50%; weaken the armor of chilled targets by 25%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Cryo Ammo is a perfect tool for Infiltrator snipers. Its freezing abilities can slow targets or even instantly shatter them if you get a headshot.

However, even if you don't plan on sniping and instead use it with pistols, SMGs, or shotguns, the slowing effects of Cryo Ammo can give an Infiltrator enough time to sneak up on a frozen enemy and put them out of their misery.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, Cryo Ammo can either increase duration (Rank 4a), or you can gain the ability to automatically grant it to all squadmates when active (Rank 4b).

Like Disruptor Ammo's Rank 4 upgrade options, you can select Rank 4b to give your teammates a chance at freezing foes as well.

This will benefit Infiltrators by allowing them to zoom in on frozen enemies or sneak up on them. By selecting Rank 4a, you can ensure that enemies will stay frozen longer after sustaining a shot with Cryo Ammo.

Rank 5 Analysis

This Rank upgrade is no different than Disruptor Ammo's Rank 5 upgrade. You can select to either carry 30 percent more ammunition or to increase headshot damage by 25 percent.

To make the best use of this selection, take into account what type of Infiltrator you're building.

Infiltrators excel at using sniper rifles, so Rank 5b should be an obvious choice if you plan on taking advantage of that trait.

However, if you plan on being a close-quarters assassin who prefers a shotgun and melee to the sniper rifle, then select Rank 5a. The added ammunition count will help, especially with shotguns that tend to carry low ammo.

Rank 6 Analysis

At Rank 6, you can either increase how effective Cryo Ammo is as a stand-alone damage-dealing power (Rank 6a) or increase damage to frozen enemies with all other attacks (Rank 6b).

If you want to obliterate enemies with one shot, such as with a sniper-proficient Infiltrator, then select Rank 6a. Infiltrators who want to weaken foes for the rest of the group should invest in Rank 6b.

Incinerate

Burn your opponents and incinerate their armor. Heavy damage to health and armor. Make an enemy panic, stopping health regeneration.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 8 sec.; Damage: 30
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%
Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 2 meters
Rank 5a—Burning Damage: Increase damage by an additional 40% over 8 seconds
Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 6a—Freeze Combo: Increase damage to frozen and chilled targets by an additional 100%
Rank 6b—Armor Damage: Increase damage to armored targets by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Incinerate is a most destructive power. Because it can function as both a source and detonator power, it is always a good idea to upgrade this to at least Rank 3. That way, you can create explosive combinations with other team members.

Of course, it can also be used as a destructive, stand-alone power. If that's your goal, don't stop upgrading at Rank 3.

Infiltrators can use this power as a great substitute for weapon fire, since it is just as destructive and doesn't increase your weight load at all.

Rank 4 Analysis

To increase the damage output of Incinerate up to 450 points of damage, select Rank 4a. The 30 percent increase is substantial enough to take down lesser enemies while inflicting large amounts of damage on tougher foes.

Your other option is to increase the impact radius of Incinerate to scorch more enemies with every blast. Make your choice for this rank based on your overall plan of attack.

If you plan on using Incinerate as a supplementary attack in place of extra weapons, then select Rank 4a. If you want to use it as a support power for your teammates to benefit as well, then select Rank 4b.

Rank 5 Analysis

Players hoping to maximize Incinerate's damage potential should invest in Rank 5a, Burning Damage. This upgrade increases the damage over time and burns enemies past the initial impact of the shot.

When coupled with other detonator powers, this power can lead to dazzling explosive results. Your other option at Rank 5 is to increase the recharge speed of Incinerate.

This will allow you to use Incinerate more often in battle and become a deadly weapon, especially in squads with Biotic specialists. Any Infiltrator build will benefit a great deal from Incinerate, so either option will be worthwhile.

However, Rank 5b's increased recharge speed will benefit Infiltrator snipers the most since you could use Incinerate in between rifle shots while you reload.

Rank 6 Analysis

Rank 6a increases damage to frozen and chilled targets by an additional 100 percent. So if you plan on using another elemental power, such as your Cryo Ammo, select this rank upgrade to benefit from cross-power upgrade bonuses.

If you don't plan on using Cryo Ammo or grouping with members who have freezing powers, then don't waste precious upgrade points on Rank 6a.

Instead, use those points on Rank 6b and gain a very useful damage increase to armored targets.

Tactical Cloak (Unique)

Become invisible. Gain a massive damage bonus when breaking cloak to attack.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 10 sec.; Duration: 8 sec.; Damage Bonus: 40%
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Duration: Increase Tactical Cloak's duration by 30%
Rank 4a—Duration: Increase power duration by 40%.
Rank 4b—Damage: Increase damage bonus by 30%
Rank 5a—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 30%
Rank 5b—Melee Damage: Increase melee damage by 100% while cloaked
Rank 6a—Bonus Power: Fire one power while cloaked and remain hidden
Rank 6b—Sniper Damage: Increase sniper rifle damage by 35% while cloaked

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Tactical Cloak is an Infiltrator's most valuable and unique ability.

Regardless of which type of build you create, every Infiltrator should invest heavily in this power, as it allows you to move about the battlefield freely and increase damage before decloaking.

At Rank 3, you can activate Tactical Cloak and stay hidden for up to 10.4 seconds. That's more than enough time to traverse across a battlefield and get the drop on a specific enemy.

> **Tip**
>
> The damage bonuses from Tactical Cloak stay on for about two seconds after decloaking, so you get a lot of time to unload on your target while decloaking.
>
> Also, you can deactivate Cloak at any time, and you get a shorter cooldown if you stay cloaked for only a short amount of time.
>
> So it can be used over and over in quick succession to get damage bonuses.

Rank 4 Analysis

At this rank, you must select whether you will be focusing more on duration (Rank 4a) or how much damage you will inflict while cloaked (Rank 4b).

Make your choice based on what kind of Infiltrator you will be. If you plan on being a sniper-class Infiltrator, then select Rank 4b.

The damage bonus will increase the chances of a one-shot kill should you miss with a headshot.

If you plan on being a close-quarter combat Infiltrator, select Rank 4a. The increased power duration will grant you extra time to sneak up on foes before unleashing your attack from close-quarters.

Rank 5 Analysis

This rank upgrade should tie in directly with your previous choice. Sniper-class Infiltrators will benefit from Rank 5a's increased recharge speed.

This will allow you to quickly reload your sniper rifle, reengage your Tactical Cloak, and strike again. If you plan on attacking enemies at close range, select Rank 5b.

The bonus melee damage will make all melee blows coming out of tactical cloak even more powerful, in some cases granting you one-hit kills.

Rank 6 Analysis

Rank 6a's Bonus Power upgrade is extremely beneficial for Infiltrators that intend on using skills like Incinerate frequently.

While cloaked, use Incinerate to soften foes up close, then put them down with melee or shotgun blasts. Rank 6b's obvious benefit is to sniper-proficient Infiltrators.

The added damage will all but ensure that any shot you take will kill your foe.

Sticky Grenade

Stick this grenade to your opponent, and the explosion will tear apart the target and the shrapnel will damage other enemies caught in the blast.

Rank 1—Damage: 700; Radius: 2 meters
Rank 2—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 1
Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%
Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 30%
Rank 5a—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 2
Rank 5b—Armor-Piercing: Increase damage to armored units by 100%
Rank 6a—Damage: Increases damage by 40%
Rank 6b—Proximity Trap: Grenades stay active for 15 seconds when attached to a wall or surface, exploding when an enemy approaches. Increase impact radius by 50%.

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Sticky Grenades are especially useful for Infiltrators who will focus on medium- to close-range combat (or Infiltrators with great throwing aim). Sneaky Infiltrators can use these on unsuspecting foes while in close range.

Engage your tactical cloak and stick one on an enemy or group of enemies before moving on to the next target.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4 you can choose to either increase the damage output or damage radius. If you want to concentrate on dishing out maximum damage, choose Rank 4a.

However, Rank 4b will increase the impact radius of your grenades, allowing you to damage more enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5 allows you to either increase the amount of grenades you can carry or increase damage to armored units. For players who want to be offensive powerhouses, consider carrying more grenades.

Rank 5a will ensure that you always have plenty of grenades for nearly all combat scenarios. Rank 5b can help soften up tough armored units that may prove initially difficult for Infiltrators.

Since Infiltrators may be at a slight disadvantage against armored foes, consider selecting Rank 5b to weaken them before attacking with the big guns.

Rank 6 Analysis

With Sticky Grenades at maximum rank, players can either increase force and damage (Rank 6b) or turn their sticky grenades into proximity mines (Rank 6a).

Both options are worthwhile upgrades, so decide on whether you want to focus on maximum damage or creating traps for enemies while you're in stealth mode.

Rank 6b is especially useful for Infiltrators who want to set up intricate traps for tougher enemies like Brutes, Nemesis, and even Phantoms.

Sabotage

Sabotage weapons and hack synthetics. Compromised synthetics fight on your side. Affected weapons overheat.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 8 sec.; Hack Duration: 12 sec.; Radius: 12 meters; Backfire: 150
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Radius: Increase impact radius by 30%
Rank 4a—Duration: Increase power duration by 50%
Rank 4b—Backfire: Increase damage taken by 30% when enemy weapons overheat
Rank 5a—Explosive Hack: Synthetics explode when destroyed, dealing 120 points of damage across a 3-meter radius
Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 6a—Berserk: Hacked synthetics fighting on your side move faster and do 100% more damage
Rank 6b—Tech Vulnerability: Increase all Tech power damage done to target by 100% for 10 seconds

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Sabotage is a useful skill whenever facing synthetic life-forms like the geth, Cerberus Engineer turrets, and Cerberus Atlas mechs. With it, you can overwrite their programming and turn enemies into allies.

While this is already extremely effective in evening things out, the added explosive backfire can also help dwindle enemy numbers. At Rank 3, Sabotage can impact enemies within a 3.25-meter radius and hack them for 12 seconds.

For Infiltrators, this skill can be extremely useful in dealing with pesky enemy turrets that can pin you down in less-than-desirable vantage points.

Sabotage the turret and wait for it to turn on the enemy. When it does, leave your position and seek better cover to snipe or launch a sneak attack on enemies from close-quarters.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can choose to either increase how long enemies remain hacked (Rank 4a) or how much damage is caused when their weapons explode (Rank 4b).

Make your selection here based on your eventual role in combat. The longer an enemy or turret is focused away from you, the longer you'll have to reposition.

By using Sabotage on turrets and enemies first, you won't have to waste the use of Tactical Cloak to hide and seek a better position. Rank 4b's Backfire ability can help soften enemies before you deliver the killing blow.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5 has two more upgrades similar to Rank 4. Here, however, choose Rank 5b to increase Sabotage's recharge speed. By doing so, Sabotage will be ready for use in under 6 seconds.

When the effect lasts 12 seconds, the benefits are clear: You'll be ready to launch another Sabotage attack before the first one completely wears off. If you choose Rank 5a, then the Sabotage will gain an explosive hack upgrade

. Affected synthetics will explode at the end of the hack and inflict an additional 120 points of damage to enemies within a 3-meter radius. If you want to concentrate on dealing damage, select Rank 5a—the added damage is worthwhile.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final upgrade selection for Sabotage can either bolster your hacked allies (Rank 6a) or increase all Tech damage done to the affected enemy for 10 seconds (Rank 6b).

If you want to use all hacked enemies as long as possible, and turn them on their comrades, then select Berserk (Rank 6a).

This will turn hacked foes into formidable allies. Otherwise, select Rank 6b, Tech Vulnerability, to increase the amount of damage you can inflict.

This is best for players who don't want to bother with crowd control and instead want to focus on damage-dealing.

Operational Mastery

Be an expert tactician on and off the battlefield. More time to line up the perfect shot. Quicker reflexes. More dexterity. More charisma.

Rank 1—Reputation Bonus: 4%; Weapon Damage Bonus: 2.5%; Weight Capacity Bonus: 15; Sniper Time-Dilation: 30%
Rank 2—Influence and Capacity: Increase weight capacity bonus by 20 points. Increase reputation bonus by 4%
Rank 3—Influence and Sniping: Increase sniper time-dilation by 10%. Increase weapon damage bonus by 2.5%. Increase reputation bonus by 4%.
Rank 4a—Weapon Damage: Increase weapon damage by 5%; increase power damage by 10%
Rank 4b—Influence and Duration: Increase duration of all powers by 25%; increase reputation bonus by 8%
Rank 5a—Squad Bonus: Increase squadmate weapon damage by 10%; increase squadmate power damage and force by 15%
Rank 5b—Weight Capacity: Increase weight capacity bonus by 35 points
Rank 6a—Damage and Duration: Increase power damage and duration by 25%
Rank 6b—Sniper Damage: Increase sniper rifle damage and headshot damage by 15%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

At Rank 3, Operational Mastery can benefit any kind of Infiltrator build.

The added weapon damage can benefit sniper rifles, shotguns, and even pistols, so don't hesitate to invest the six points required to upgrade this minimally.

However, if you plan on focusing on sniper rifle damage, consider investing more points in this immensely helpful passive power.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4a, you can continue to increase weapon damage (Rank 4a) or gain a bonus to power duration and reputation (Rank 4b). All Infiltrator builds can benefit from increased damage.

However, Infiltrators who need increased time in stealth mode (Tactical Cloak) should select Rank 4b. The increased power duration will allow you to stay hidden longer to take care of business.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5a will grant teammates increases in weapon damage, power damage, and power force. This will prove useful for Infiltrators who rely on squad support the most.

If you plan on sniping and need your team to bear the burden of keeping enemy fire off you, select this upgrade. Rank 5b will increase your weight capacity.

Select this upgrade if you want to carry heavier weapons like shotguns and assault rifles. By increasing your weight capacity, you can keep your recharge time low and get more use of your powers.

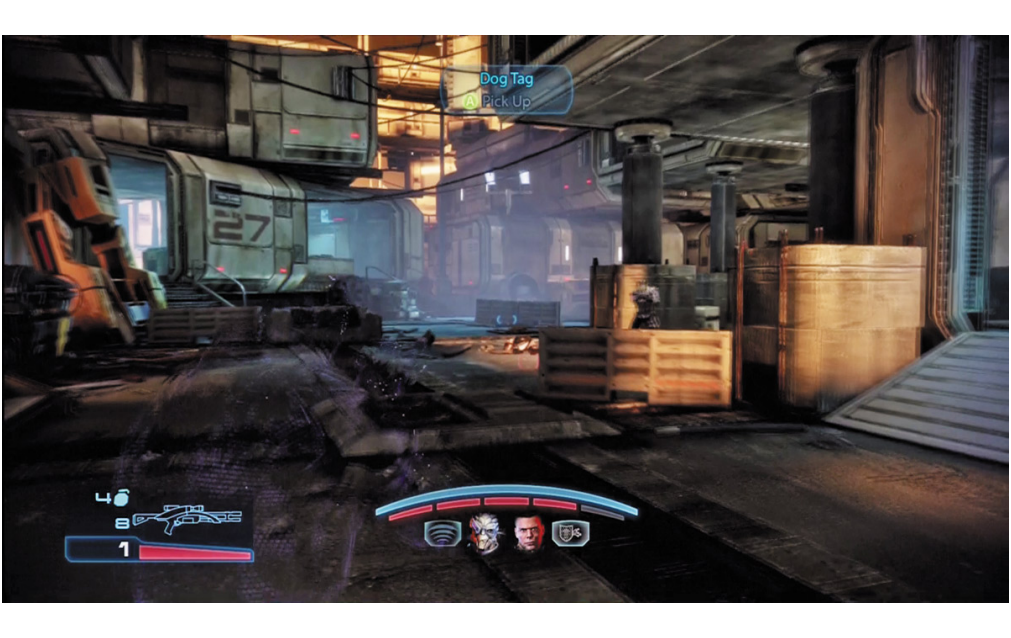
Rank 6 Analysis

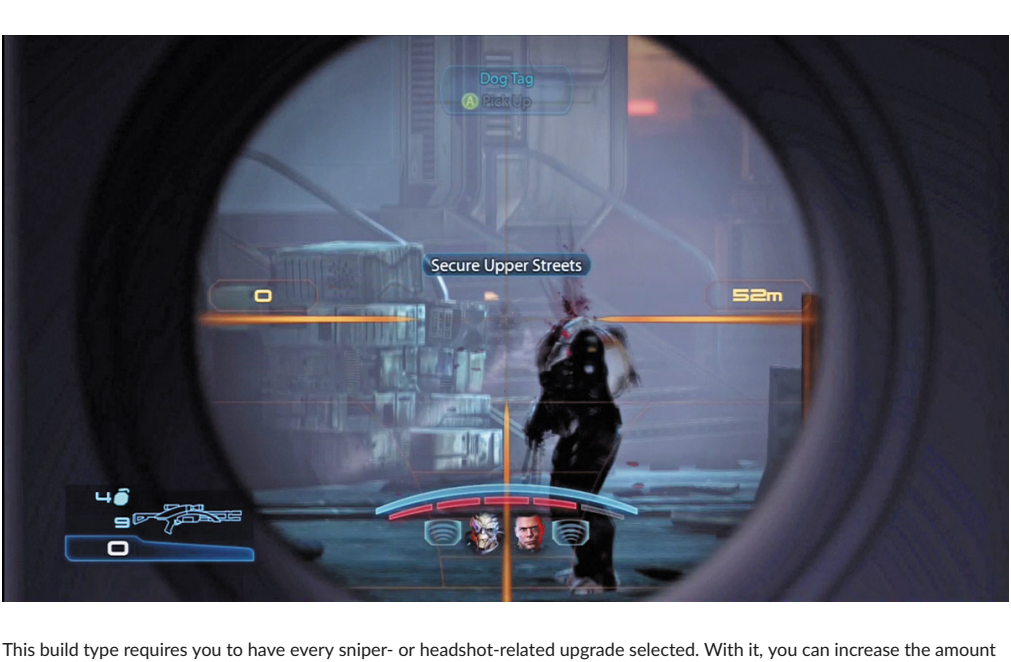
Finally, Rank 6 will force you to decide whether to go sniper-heavy (Rank 6b) or increase the damage and duration of your power (Rank 6a). The choice here is easy.

If you've made other sniper-leaning choices for your upgrades, pick Rank 6b. With it, you'll be a one-hit kill machine. Otherwise, benefit from Rank 6a's increased damage and duration.

BUILDS

Stealth Assassin: Sniper

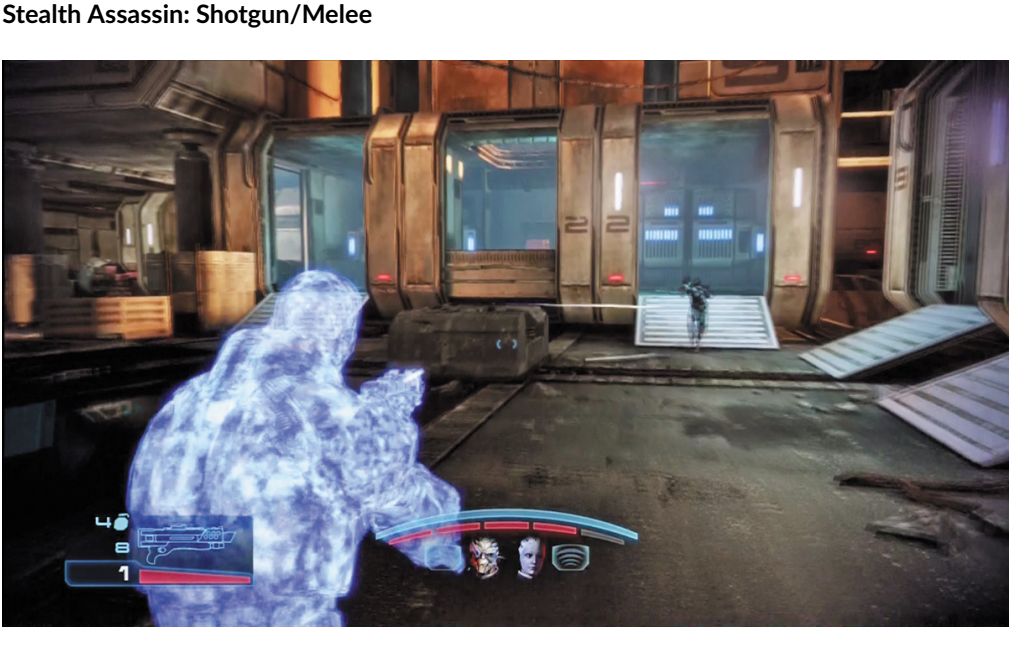




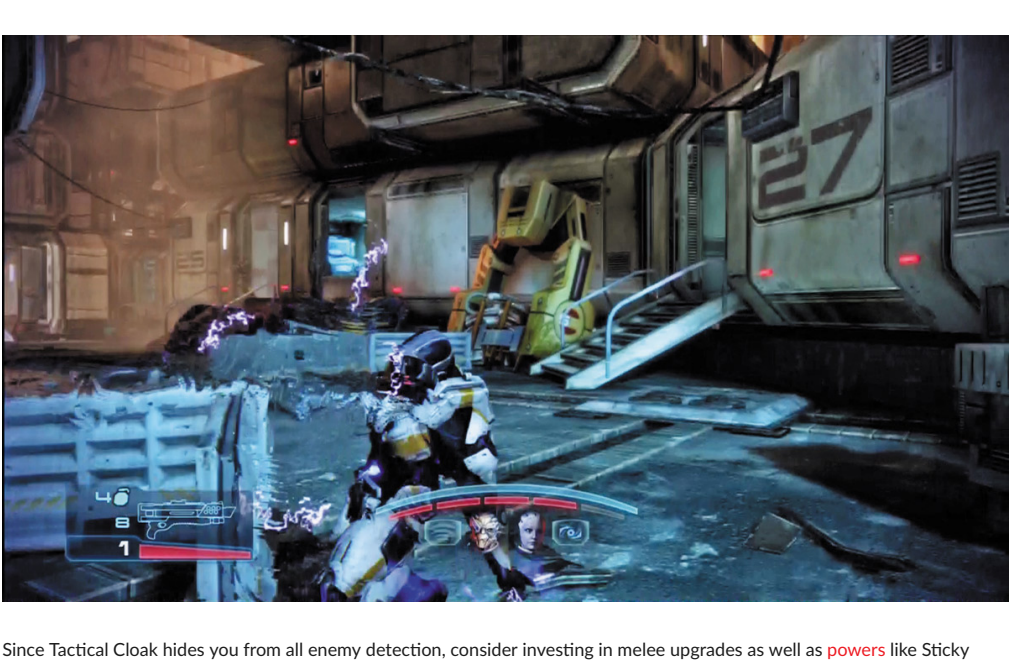
This build type requires you to have every sniper- or headshot-related upgrade selected. With it, you can increase the amount of time you spend hidden from foes while using Tactical Cloak, and you can quickly unleash a flurry of headshots on unsuspecting enemies.

Invest heavily in powers like Cryo Ammo, Tactical Cloak, Sabotage (to turn enemies away from you while sniping), and Disruptor Ammo. Stay hidden as much as possible and avoid hand-to-hand combat in favor of a high vantage point.

Stealth Assassin: Shotgun/Melee



Assault Trooper



Since Tactical Cloak hides you from all enemy detection, consider investing in melee upgrades as well as powers like Sticky Grenade, Incinerate, and Cryo Ammo. Equip a shotgun, activate Cryo Ammo, and then engage your Tactical Cloak.

With those three elements alone, you can roam around the battlefield blasting enemies at close range and often obliterating them in one shot.

For added effectiveness, select Rank 6a for Tactical Cloak and you'll be able to unleash a devastating Incinerate blast from the cover of your cloak before unloading with the shotgun.

If you still don't manage to destroy the enemy, then reengage your cloak and attack with a melee blow before the rest of the enemies can get a lock on your position.

Be warned, however: This build is prone to taking more damage, so you'll have to be fast in taking cover and reengaging your cloak to stay out of enemy detection.

The Squad

Sentinel

Sentinels are unique, bringing both Tech and Biotic abilities to the battlefield.

In addition to complete weapons training, Sentinels are equipped with an advanced shield that makes taking cover much less necessary and rushing enemies much more productive.

This armor system can also be detonated to blast nearby enemies.

With great Tech and Biotic powers available, as well as decent weapon and melee damage potential, the Sentinel is built to cause maximum damage in nearly any way possible.

This makes the Sentinel one of the most versatile damage-dealers on the battlefield.

However, regardless of what kind of Sentinel build you create, one thing is always certain: You'll always be able to tank and cut a path through enemies.

With so many different types of Sentinel builds available, the weapon loadout can vary from assault rifles and SMGs to shotguns and pistols.

POWERS

Throw

Toss your enemy through the air with this Biotic blast.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 4 sec.; Force: 600 Newtons
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Force: Increase force by 30%
Rank 4a—Force: Increase force by 40%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 2 meters
Rank 5a—Detonate: Increase force and damage of Biotic detonations by 50%
Rank 5b—Recharge Combo: Reset recharge time after a Biotic combo detonates
Rank 6a—Double Throw: Launch two Throw projectiles to seek two targets instead of one
Rank 6b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

In the hands of a powerful Sentinel, Throw is a very useful skill. With a single blast, you can rid yourself of pesky foes and clear a path in battle for squadmates.

At Rank 3, your blast of 780 Newtons hurls foes even farther, so consider upgrading up to at least Rank 3, even if you don't plan on using this often.

However, if you don't plan on upgrading this power beyond Rank 3, keep it in your arsenal anyway; its function as a detonator power can complement nearly any squad composition with source powers.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can gain a simple force or radius increase.

Rank 4a, Force, increases the amount of force exerted by each Throw blast to 1,020 Newtons. This has the added ability of knocking foes into other enemies and disrupting enemy attacks.

Rank 4b, Radius, increases the impact of radius by 2 meters, allowing you to hit more than one enemy per Throw blast.

This is especially useful in narrow corridors or battlefields where enemies bunch together into smaller groups.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you can increase the volatility of your Throw power (Rank 5a) or grant yourself the ability to create even more explosive combos (Rank 5b).

Select Rank 5a if you want to use Throw as a damage-dealing detonator for source powers. In fact, as a Sentinel, you can create your own Biotic explosions using Warp as a source power.

If you want to create these explosive combos, then select Rank 5a. However, Rank 5b can also help if you have several squadmates who can launch source powers.

By frequently using your Throw as a detonator power, you can maximize Throw's potential for damage output, not just enemy disruption.

Rank 6 Analysis

At Rank 6, you can increase either the amount of Throw projectiles to seek two targets (Rank 6a) or Throw's recharge speed by 50 percent.

If you plan on using Throw as an area-clearing disruptive power, then select Rank 6a. The extra Throw projectile will help clear more enemies efficiently.

If you plan on using Throw as a detonator power, then select Rank 6b; that way you can detonate any source powers set up by your squadmates.

Warp

Rip your enemy apart at a molecular level. Stop targeted enemy from regenerating health. Weaken armor.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 8 sec.; Damage: 250; Duration: 10 sec.
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%
Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%
Rank 4b—Detonate: Increase force, damage, and impact radius of combo detonations by 50%
Rank 5a—Lasting Damage: Increase damage by 40%; increase duration by 60%
Rank 5b—Expose: Increase weapon damage taken by a target by 15%; increase power damage taken by 15% for 10 seconds
Rank 6a—Pierce: Increase damage to barriers and armor by 50%. Weaken armored targets by an additional 25%
Rank 6b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 35%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Warp is a cruel and vicious power, perfect to use against Reapers and Cerberus foes alike. Even at low ranks it can deal 300 points of damage on an enemy for up to 10 seconds.

You can stop upgrading at Rank 3 and use Warp strictly as a source power for power combinations, but its value goes far beyond simply using it as a source, so consider making Warp one of your go-to skills.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can either increase damage (Rank 4a) up to 375 points, a worthwhile investment, or you can add a unique detonate ability (Rank 4b).

This benefit is gained only when using Warp as a source power while another power is used to detonate it. When it does, Rank 4b will increase all aspects of the detonation by 50 percent.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5a, Lasting Damage, increases both damage and duration of Warp, making it deadlier and longer lasting.

It may not be fancy, but the selection amplifies two of Warp's three most important components. If you plan on frequently using Warp as a stand-alone attack, then select Rank 5a.

Expose, Rank 5b, increases both weapon and power damage to targets affected by Warp.

This is useful when you want to weaken enemies and allow your squadmates to inflict additional damage while your powers recharge.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final upgrade tree in Warp either increases its recharge speed to maximum, lowering the recharge time to 10 seconds (Rank 6b), or increases piercing ability to weaken barriers and armor (Rank 6a).

Like Rank 5b, the benefits of Rank 6a allow your squadmates to pour on additional damage to affected enemies.

This particular upgrade is perfect when facing Cerberus troopers like Guardians and shielded foes like the geth.

Lift Grenade

Lob this grenade into a group of enemies to send them flying. Deal high damage.

Rank 1—Lift Grenade: Damage: 350; Radius: 2 meters; Duration: 4 sec.
Rank 2—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 1
Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%
Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 30%
Rank 5a—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 2
Rank 5b—Duration: Increase power duration by 50%
Rank 6a—Slam: Slam floating targets to the ground as Lift wears off, stunning them for 3 seconds
Rank 6b—Damage and Radius: Increases damage and impact radius by 30%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

A Sentinel's Lift Grenades are a great complement for players who want to focus on enemy disruption.

Like Throw, Lift Grenades have the unique ability to remove enemies instantly from behind cover and entrenched positions, and disrupt them while they're on the attack.

Incorporate Lift Grenades into your Sentinel's arsenal if you plan on tanking heavily.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can choose to increase either the damage output or its damage radius. If you want to concentrate on dishing out maximum damage, choose Rank 4a.

However, Rank 4b will increase the impact radius of your grenades, allowing you to affect more enemies. Rank 4b is especially useful when clearing out small groups in narrow spaces.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5 allows you to either increase the amount of grenades you can carry or increase the duration of the grenades' Lift effects.

For players who want to be offensive powerhouses, consider carrying more grenades. Rank 5a will ensure that you always have plenty of grenades for nearly all combat scenarios.

Rank 5b, however, will help Sentinels set up better Biotic power combinations. If you plan on using Lift Grenades as a source power, then select this rank upgrade.

Rank 6 Analysis

At maximum rank, players can either increase damage and radius of their grenades (Rank 6b) or add a Slam effect to the grenades' explosions (Rank 6a).

Both upgrades are great at increasing damage output. The Slam effect can stun even the toughest of foes, so be sure that your team is ready to capitalize while the target is incapacitated.

If you want to focus on absolute destruction, then select Rank 6a.

Tech Armor (Unique)

Protect yourself with this holographic armor or detonate it to damage nearby enemies. Slow power use.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 12 sec.; Damage Reduction: 25%; Explosion Damage: 200; Explosion Radius: 3 meters
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed after armor detonation by 25%
Rank 3—Damage and Radius: Increase detonation damage and impact radius by 20%
Rank 4a—Damage and Radius: Increase detonation damage and impact radius by 30%
Rank 4b—Durability: Increase damage protection by an additional 5%
Rank 5a—Power Damage: Increase power damage and force by 20% while armor is active
Rank 5b—Melee Damage: Increase melee damage by 30% while the power is active
Rank 6a—Power Recharge: Reduce power speed penalty by 30%
Rank 6b—Durability: Increase damage protection by an additional 10%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Tech Armor is the Sentinel's best unique power. With it, a Sentinel can sustain increased damage while rushing into close-quarters battle or they can absorb long-range fire while moving about the battlefield.

Tech Armor's best perk, however, is the ability to detonate into a radial shock wave and damage enemies around it.

Though not very powerful at low ranks, the 240 points of damage it inflicts within a 3.6-meter radius (at Rank 3) is more than enough to finish off weakened foes or stun fresh enemies temporarily.

Tip

Because this power, while active, slows power recharge speed, you can keep it off for extra offensive power and turn it on when you need to be more defensive.

This makes the Sentinel very flexible.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4a, you can increase the base damage and radius of Tech Armor's explosion to inflict even more damage and reach more enemies.

This upgrade is particularly useful for Sentinels who want to use Tech Armor's detonation as a weapon and as a defensive measure.

However, Rank 4b will increase Tech Armor's durability. Select Rank 4b to last longer in battle and take more damage.

This upgrade is best suited for tanking Sentinels.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you can choose one of two damage increases: your power damage (Rank 5a) or your melee damage (Rank 5b).

Rank 5a is a great choice for any type of Sentinel build. The power increase is great for disrupting enemies and creating powerful Biotic combinations.

Rank 5b, however, increases only melee damage. Select this if you plan on wading into close-quarter combat frequently.

The increased melee damage will prove useful when trying to clear a path through waves of enemies.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final rank upgrade is a choice between increasing power recharge (Rank 6a) or durability (Rank 6b).

Select Rank 6a if you intend on using other destructive powers as your primary forms of attack. Active Tech Armor slows all your other power cooldowns, and this upgrade decreases that penalty.

Sentinels who plan on tanking and wading into multiple foes to clear paths and weaken targets should invest in Rank 6b; the increased durability will allow you to sustain more damage.

Overload

Overload electronics with this power surge, stunning your enemy. Effective against shields, barriers, and synthetics. Not as effective against organics.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 8 sec.; Damage: 220
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%
Rank 4a—Chain Overload: Hit 1 additional target within 8 meters with 60% less damage
Rank 4b—Damage: Increase damage by 30%
Rank 5a—Neural Shock: Incapacitate weaker organic enemies for a short duration
Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 6a—Chain Overload: Increase damage by 15%. Hit 1 additional target within 8 meters with 60% less damage
Rank 6b—Shield Damage: Increase damage to barriers and shields by an additional 100%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

By far one of the most useful powers against synthetics, Overload can temporarily fry electrical equipment like turrets and singe synthetic foes.

At Ranks 1 through 3, you gain a standard recharge speed and damage increase, so you could stop upgrading at Rank 3 if you don't plan on making Overload an integral part of your attack arsenal.

However, during missions where you encounter geth or other synthetic opponents, you can still prove to be very useful.

Tanking Sentinels should use Overload often, as it is a source power and a great way to remove turrets from the equation temporarily.

Rank 4 Analysis

If you do make Overload a more integral part of your attack arsenal, then consider upgrading Rank 4a.

This will increase the amount of targets you can affect by one. So instead of overloading only one enemy at a time, you can stun multiple enemies with each Overload blast.

Rank 4b is a standard damage increase. Select this if you want to focus more on dealing damage to individual enemies while tanking.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you gain the option to stun organic foes as well as synthetics.

The Neural Shock ability will expand your role across a number of missions since Overload power will no longer be effective against synthetic targets alone.

Rank 5b increases Overload's recharge speed, allowing you to use the skill more frequently in battle.

The trade-off between Ranks 5a and 5b are simple: If you want to use Overload against more varied types of enemies, select 5a.

If you want to use it more frequently in battle to stun enemies en masse, select Rank 5b.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Rank 4a, Rank 6a will increase how many targets you can reach with an Overload blast by one and will increase the damage it inflicts by 15 percent.

The choice is simple: If you selected Rank 4a, make the same selection here and you will be able to stun small groups of enemies with one Overload blast.

Not only will you incapacitate more enemies at once, but you'll also expend less power to do it.

At Rank 6b, you can increase the damage dealt to barriers and shields, becoming extremely effective against all shielded foes.

Cryo Blast

Flash-freeze and shatter unprotected enemies. Slow down the rest. Weaken armor. Frozen targets won't regenerate health.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 4 sec.; Freeze Duration: 4 sec.; Movement Speed: −15%
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Improve recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Duration: Increase power duration by 40%
Rank 4a—Duration: Increase power duration by 60%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 2 meters
Rank 5a—Speed Reduction: Decrease movement speed of chilled targets by an additional 20%
Rank 5b—Cryo Explosion: Increase damage to chilled and frozen targets by 10%
Rank 6a—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 50%
Rank 6b—Frozen Vulnerability: Increase damage to frozen and chilled targets by 15%; weaken armored targets by an additional 25%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

By upgrading Cryo Blast to Rank 3, you can increase the duration of freeze effects to nearly 6 seconds while decreasing the recharge speed for the power to 3.2 seconds.

That means that if you use Cryo Blast heavily, you can fire a blast nearly every few seconds and freeze enemies for about the same time.

So if you time things properly, you can theoretically keep a target frozen indefinitely until the rest of the squad can finish them off.

This skill also works as a "source" power for cryo explosions. Once affected by Cryo Blast, targets can then be detonated using a detonator power like Overload.

Most importantly, if you plan on creating a Sentinel that can deal damage using primarily powers, invest heavily in Cryo Blast and Warp.

Rank 4 Analysis

The main benefit of Cryo Blast is that you can slow enemies and potentially freeze them in place, removing them from the equation on the battlefield.

At Rank 4, you must choose whether to slow singular enemies for longer periods of time (great against larger, more powerful enemies) or to slow multiple enemies for less time.

Make your selection here based on whether you want to focus more on tanking or damage output.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you can add an explosive effect to Cryo Blast with Rank 5b. Once frozen or chilled, the cryo effects can self-detonate and inflict 10 percent more damage.

If tanking is your goal, select Rank 5a. This slows down enemy movement by an additional 20 percent, making foes move 35 percent slower overall.

When combined with Rank 4a, the decrease in movement speed makes for an overwhelming advantage on the battlefield.

Not only will foes move slower, but also they'll do so for nearly 7 seconds. Rank 5b is perfect for Sentinels who want to focus on ultimate destruction.

Rank 6 Analysis

Sentinels who want to focus on using more powers over weapons should select Rank 6a.

This will increase the recharge speed for Cryo Blast and allow you to use it far more frequently on the battlefield.

This is best when trying to focus on explosive power combinations. However, if you want to tank and soften enemies, then select Rank 6b.

The Frozen Vulnerability upgrade will weaken foes for your squad to finish off.

Offensive Mastery

Be an expert tactician on and off the battlefield. Faster and stronger powers. More weapon damage. More dexterity. More charisma.

Rank 1—Reputation Bonus: 4%; Weapon Damage Bonus: 2.5%; Power Damage Bonus: 5%; Weight Capacity Bonus: 15
Rank 2—Influence and Capacity: Increase weight capacity bonus by 20 points; increase reputation bonus by 4%
Rank 3—Influence and Damage: Increase power damage and force bonuses by 5%. Increase weapon damage bonus by 2.5%. Increase reputation bonus by 4%.
Rank 4a—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage bonuses by 15%
Rank 4b—Influence and Duration: Increase duration of all powers by 25%; increase reputation bonus by 8%
Rank 5a—Squad Bonus: Increase squadmate weapon damage by 10%; increase the force and damage of squadmate powers by 15%
Rank 5b—Weight Capacity: Increase weight capacity bonus by 35 points
Rank 6a—Force and Damage: Increase power damage and force bonuses, and power duration by 25%
Rank 6b—Bonus Power: Use two powers in a row by giving the first power a 15% chance to cause no cooldown

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Offensive Mastery should be upgraded for every type of Sentinel build. A Sentinel is built for dealing as much damage as possible in a short amount of time.

If a Sentinel stays too long in the midst of enemy fire, then no amount of Tech Armor will be able to sustain the shields long enough.

By investing in Offensive Mastery, you can increase the amount of damage you can inflict while in battle and potentially dispatch enemies quicker, before they dispatch you.

At Rank 3, the bonuses to weapon and power damage will help do that.

Rank 4 Analysis

Select Rank 4a if you want to increase the force and damage to your weapons (Rank 4a) and tank a bit more heavily, or choose Rank 4b to increase the duration of your powers.

Rank 4b is particularly useful while using powers like Overload and Cryo Blast, so make your choice here dependent on which powers you intend on using in battle.

Rank 5 Analysis

If you plan on wading into war frequently and anticipate requiring shotguns, assault rifles, and destructive powers, then select Rank 5b.

The increased weight capacity will help balance out your weapon loadout and power recharge time. Otherwise, select Rank 5a to grant your squadmates an increase to their powers.

This is especially useful for tanks that want to soften foes for the rest of the team to obliterate.

Rank 6 Analysis

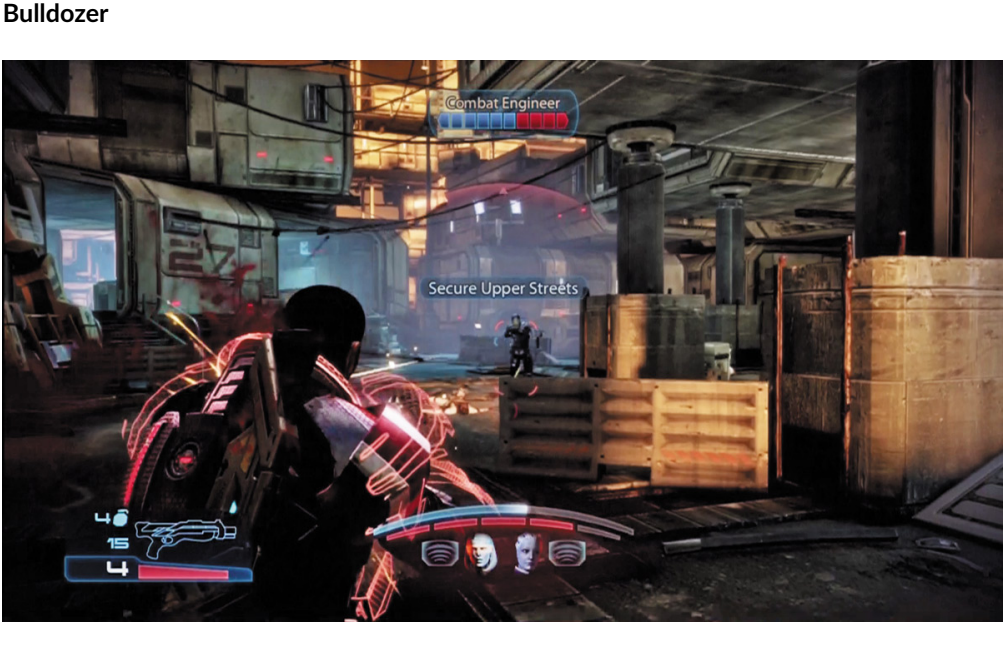
Sentinels who want to create powerful Biotic combinations should invest in Rank 6b.

The Bonus Power upgrade will increase the chances of using two powers in a row, like Warp and Overload, without causing a cooldown.

For a simple force and damage upgrade, select Rank 6a. This is a good upgrade for nearly any other type of Sentinel build.

BUILDS

Bulldozer



Assault Trooper
Reload

Saving content. Please don't turn off your console.

To create a bulldozing Sentinel, focus on amplifying your disruptive powers like Throw, Lift Grenade, and Tech Armor's detonation abilities.

Equip a shotgun and you'll be ready to wade into battle, clearing a path for the rest of your squad to follow.

This tank build will also allow you to flush out foes from cover and weaken them before the rest of the crew puts them down.

To add an extra element of enemy disruption, invest a few upgrade points in Cryo Blast. With it you'll be able to slow enemy movement down as well.

Wrecking ball

Combat Engineer
Reload

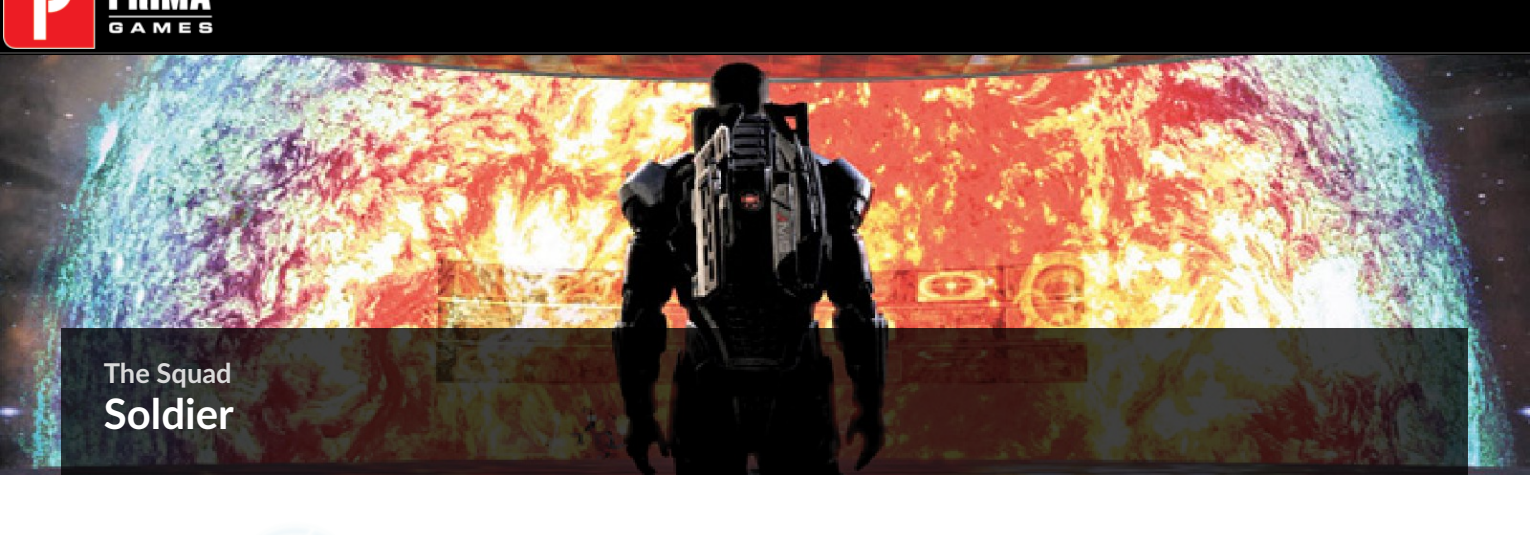
Dog Tag
Pick Up
XP +225 Experience

A Sentinel wrecking ball doesn't focus as much on enemy disruption and tanking as much as it does on utter destruction.

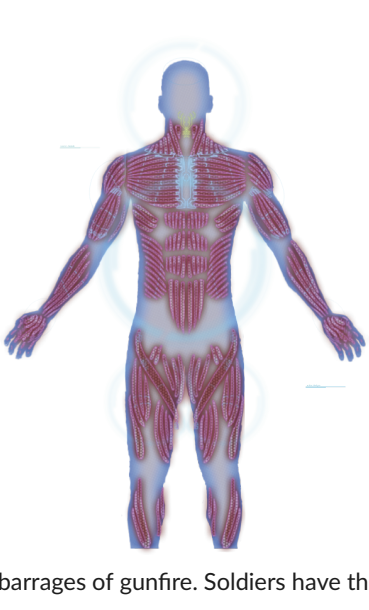
Invest your points in weapon damage and powers like Overload, Warp, and Throw. You'll be able to create powerful Biotic combination explosions.

Furthermore, with points invested in Cryo Blast, you can freeze enemies as well and use that as a source power too.

Invest points in increasing the durability of your Tech Armor rather than its detonation damage, and you'll be able to hold your own in battle a lot longer without needing to recharge your shields.



Soldier



Soldiers are pure combat specialists: No one is more suited to taking down enemies with barrages of gunfire. Soldiers have thorough weapons training and can use all special ammo types as well as grenades.

High-level operatives are outfitted with ocular synaptic processors that allow them to focus on targets with lethal accuracy.

In combat, few other classes will thrive as much or as quickly as a Soldier. With power proficiencies that benefit all weapons, a Soldier can rush into battle and excel, whether using a sniper rifle or a pistol.

More importantly, a Soldier is better suited to carry all weapon types at once and switch between any of them effectively, creating a disadvantage into an advantage.

While all classes can carry all weapon types, nearly all other classes function best with only one or two. A Soldier functions at a high level even with all weapons equipped.

Since Soldiers are true weapon masters, there really is no limit as to how many weapons you should carry.

If you want to maximize power recharge speed, you should always lessen the load, of course, but even with a high recharge speed, Soldiers can still make valuable use of their Adrenaline Rush in combat.

POWERS

Adrenaline Rush (Unique)

Be the fastest fighter on the battlefield. Slow down combat, allowing time to line up the perfect shot. More weapon damage.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 8.33 sec.; Duration: 4 sec.; Time Dilation: 50%; Weapon Damage Bonus: 100%
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Duration: Increase power duration by 30%
Rank 4a—Hardening: Decrease health and shield damage taken by 20%
Rank 4b—Dilation and Damage: Increase time dilation by 20%; increase weapon damage bonus by 40%
Rank 5a—Duration: Increase power duration by 40%
Rank 5b—Melee Damage: Increase melee damage by 50%
Rank 6a—Shield Boost: Increase shield strength by 50%
Rank 6b—Power Use: Use 1 offensive power while Adrenaline Rush is active

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

A Soldier's most valuable power, Adrenaline Rush allows you to go into a focused state and slow everything down around you.

While everything and everyone moves at a slower rate, you can react at normal speed and get the jump on foes. Even at Rank 3, the increased duration will allow you to stay ahead of your prey up to 5.2 seconds.

In battle, where every second counts, this is a huge advantage.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4a, you can choose to increase your toughness while Adrenaline Rush is active. Select this upgrade to sustain more damage while out in the open.

If you intend to use Adrenaline Rush infrequently, select this option, as it gives you the most protection, but for a shorter amount of time.

Rank 4b will increase your weapon damage and time dilation, allowing you to gain a greater speed advantage from your foes.

Soldiers who intend on using Adrenaline Rush more frequently should invest in this option.

Rank 5 Analysis

Like Rank 4, the upgrades in Rank 5 depend on whether you intend to use this power frequently in battle. Select Rank 5a, Duration, if you intend on using Adrenaline Rush frequently and need it to last longer.

The longer you have a speed advantage, the better you'll be at picking off multiple enemies when needed. Otherwise, select Rank 5b.

The increased melee damage will help fend off nearby foes or finish off weakened enemies.

Rank 6 Analysis

If you plan on using Adrenaline Rush to launch massive offensive attacks, then select Rank 6b. The extra power use will allow you to lead your attacks with a powerful Concussive Shot and knock enemies off guard.

For increased toughness on the battlefield, select Rank 6a. The Shield Boost will strengthen your resistance to damage and allow you to stay in the fight much longer.

Concussive Shot

Flatten your enemy with a precise blast at short or long range. Effective against barriers.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 10 sec.; Damage: 100; Force: 300 Newtons
Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%
Rank 3—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 20%
Rank 4a—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 30%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 1.5 meters
Rank 5a—Shatter: Increase force and damage to frozen targets by 100%
Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 35%
Rank 6a—Amplification: Power Concussive Shot with the properties of the active ammo power, enabling it to burn, freeze, disrupt, warp, or pierce armor
Rank 6b—Shredder: Increase damage to organics by 100% over 10 seconds; increase force by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Concussive Shot is a lot more than just another burst from your weapon of choice.

With a single blast of Concussive Shot, you can disrupt an enemy's progress, knock them down, or deplete their protective barrier.

At Rank 3, Concussive Shot can dish out 100 points of damage and 300 Newtons of force.

When paired with a source power like a Cryo or Incendiary Ammo, Concussive Shot is the perfect detonator.

Rank 4 Analysis

Like most other powers with explosive or concussive abilities, the first upgrade choice given is to either increase the power's effects, in this case force and damage (Rank 4a), or increase its radius (Rank 4b).

Select your upgrade depending on your eventual build. If you want to become a formidable weapon damage dealer, select Rank 4a. This will inflict more damage per Concussive Shot.

By selecting Rank 4b, you can knock more enemies down per shot but inflict less damage. This option is helpful in squads that favor disrupting enemies before killing them.

Rank 5 Analysis

If you plan on grouping with Cryo-friendly squadmates or frequently using Cryo Ammo, select Rank 5a. Shatter will affect only foes that have been frozen or chilled with Cryo Blast or Cryo Ammo.

If you don't favor Cryo users in your squad, then select Rank 5b.

The increased recharge speed for Concussive Shot will ensure you're able to knock down enemies all over the battlefield with less time spent waiting for your power to ready.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Rank 5a, Rank 6a takes other powers into account in order to function. At Rank 6a, Amplification will power Concussive Shot with ammo powers like Cryo or Warp Ammo.

Since you have all ammo power types, Rank 6a will automatically imbue Concussive Shot with the abilities of any ammo power you have active.

If you don't plan on using ammo powers often, then select Rank 6b, Shredder.

This upgrade adds a damage-over-time effect to every shot and increases the force of each Concussive Shot, allowing you to knock down tougher enemies.

Frag Grenade

Lob this grenade at your enemy, and the shrapnel will take care of the rest. Effective against armor.

Rank 1—Damage: 450; Impact Radius: 5 meters
Rank 2—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 1
Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%
Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%
Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 30%
Rank 5a—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 2
Rank 5b—Bleed Damage: Increase damage to organics by 40% over 10 seconds
Rank 6a—Armor-piercing: Increase damage to armor by 50%
Rank 6b—Shield Overload: Increase damage to shields by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Frag Grenades are useful in nearly all combat situations. At Ranks 1 through 3, a well-aimed grenade can serve as a great medium- to long-range weapon.

Hurl it ahead of you and inflict damage on unsuspecting foes.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can choose to either increase the damage output or its damage radius. If you want to concentrate on dishing out maximum damage, choose Rank 4a.

However, Rank 4b will increase the impact radius of your grenade, allowing you to damage more enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5 allows you to either increase the amount of grenades you can carry or add a bleed effect to all organic targets. For players who want to be offensive powerhouses, consider carrying more grenades.

Rank 5a will ensure that you always have plenty of grenades for nearly all combat scenarios. As a Soldier, the more ammunition and explosives you have, the better.

Rank 5b can help maximize damage on organic (nonsynthetic) targets.

The bleed effect left by grenades can add a significant amount of damage to enemies, especially if you've chosen Rank 4b—increase in impact radius.

The drawback to Rank 5b is that it won't affect synthetic targets such as the geth or turrets.

Rank 6 Analysis

With Frag Grenade at maximum rank, players can either increase armor-piercing abilities or add an EMP pulse to the explosion to affect shields.

Both options help further weaken protected enemies, but once again, you must choose whether you'll be weakening organic (armored) or synthetic (shielded) enemies.

If you chose Rank 5b—adding a bleed effect—then select Rank 6a to complement your power selection.

Incendiary Ammo

Shoot and your enemy will burst into flames. Increases weapon damage, eats through armor, and can make an enemy panic.

Rank 1—Health damage: +10%; Armor damage: +10%
Rank 2—Panic: Improve the odds of panicking a target by 15%
Rank 3—Damage: Increase health and armor damage bonuses by 4%
Rank 4a—Damage: Increase health and armor damage bonuses by 6%
Rank 4b—Squad Bonus: Squadmates gain Incendiary Ammo at 50% effectiveness
Rank 5a—Ammo Capacity: Increase ammo capacity by 30%
Rank 5b—Headshots: Increase headshot damage by 25%
Rank 6a—Damage: Increase health and armor damage bonuses by 10%
Rank 6b—Explosive Burst: Ignite enemies with an intermittent explosion that covers 2.5 meters for 100 damage

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Incendiary Ammo is a great power for a damage-dealer because it makes all weapon fire even more lethal.

With Incendiary Ammo (or any Ammo power, in fact), it's best to activate it before every mission and make sure you keep it active at all times. When active, it extends damage over time and sets enemies ablaze.

It also functions as a "source" power that can be detonated using other powers like Concussive Shot or Frag Grenades.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, Incendiary Ammo can increase damage to health and armor (Rank 4a), or you can gain the ability to automatically grant it to all squadmates when active (Rank 4b).

The choice really breaks down to whether you want to tank and dish out as much damage as you can or whether you will hang back as part of the squad.

If your squadmates don't have any ammo powers available to them, select Rank 4b to grant them use of yours. Otherwise, select Rank 4a and increase your ability to inflict as much damage as possible.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you can select to either carry 30 percent more ammunition or to increase headshot damage by 25 percent.

To make the best use of this selection, take into account what types of weapons you will be using the most. If you plan on using weapons like sniper rifles or assault rifles with high accuracy, select Rank 5b.

If you prefer to serve as the team's tank, equip yourself with a shotgun and select Rank 4a. You'll benefit from the increased ammunition count when engaging enemies in close combat—the shotgun's best range.

Rank 6 Analysis

Both options in Rank 6 increase Incendiary Ammo's damage output. Rank 6a increases health and armor damage across the board.

This makes all shots with Incendiary Ammo more powerful since it's a good general increase to overall damage. Rank 6b adds an entirely new effect to shots taken using Incendiary Ammo.

Instead of simply dealing more damage to health and armor, it ignites enemies and explodes, causing more damage in a wider radius and reaching more enemies nearby.

Your Rank 6 option should depend on whether you want to take down enemies one at a time or if you want to soften groups of enemies for the rest of your squad to finish off.

Disruptor Ammo

Bring down your enemy's barriers and shields. Chance to stun. More weapon damage. More damage to shields and barriers.

Rank 1—Health Damage Bonus: +5%; Shield and Barrier Damage: +20%
Rank 2—Stun: Improve the odds of stunning a target by 15%
Rank 3—Damage: Increase health damage bonus by 2%; increase shield and barrier damage bonuses by 8%
Rank 4a—Damage: Increase health damage bonus by 3%; increase shield and barrier damage bonuses by 12%
Rank 4b—Squad Bonus: Squadmates gain Disruptor Ammo at 50% effectiveness
Rank 5a—Ammo Capacity: Increase ammo capacity by 30%
Rank 5b—Headshot: Increase headshot damage by 25%
Rank 6a—Damage: Increase health damage bonus by 5%; increase shield and barrier damage bonuses by 20%
Rank 6b—Stun: Improve the odds of stunning a target by 25%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Disruptor Ammo is a great power for a weapon master because it makes all weapon fire even more lethal.

With Disruptor Ammo (or any Ammo power, in fact), it's best to activate it before every mission and make sure you keep it active at all times.

When active, it adds the ability to stun foes and incapacitate them before they can attack. It also functions as a "source" power that can be detonated using other powers like Incinerate.

For a Soldier, Disruptor Ammo can prove to be very effective in softening up foes before leaving them for the rest of the squad to wipe out.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, Disruptor Ammo can either increase damage to health and shield/barriers (Rank 4a), or you can gain the ability to automatically grant it to all squadmates when active (Rank 4b).

The choice really breaks down to whether you want to dish out as much damage as you can or whether you want to stalk stunned enemies on the battlefield.

By granting your squadmates the use of your Disruptor Ammo, you'll increase the number of enemies that are stunned on the battlefield.

This will make it easier to finish them off with shotgun or pistol blasts at any range.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you can select to either carry 30 percent more ammunition or to increase headshot damage by 25 percent. To make the best use of this selection, take into account what type of Soldier you're building.

If you plan on using sniper rifles often, Rank 5b should be an obvious choice. However, if you plan on being a close-quarters combatant who prefers a shotgun and melee to the sniper rifle, then select Rank 5a.

The added ammunition count will help, especially with shotguns that tend to carry low ammo.

Rank 6 Analysis

Both options in Rank 6 increase Disruptor Ammo's damage output. However, Rank 6a increases damage to health, barriers, and shields, depending on the enemy.

This makes all shots with Disruptor Ammo more powerful since it's a good general increase to overall damage. Rank 6b adds an entirely new effect to shots taken using Disruptor Ammo.

Instead of simply dealing more damage to health, shields, and barriers, it stuns enemies and incapacitates them, allowing your team to then take them out.

Your Rank 6 option should depend on whether you want to take down enemies one at a time or if you want to incapacitate them before wiping them out with Frag Grenades or other weapon fire.

Cryo Ammo

Flash-freeze and shatter unprotected enemies. Slow down the rest. Weaken armor. Frozen targets won't regenerate health.

Rank 1—Freeze Duration: 3 sec.; Movement Speed: −15%; Armor Weakening: −25%
Rank 2—Freeze Chance: Improve the odds of freezing a target by 30%
Rank 3—Freeze Duration: Increase freeze duration by 40%
Rank 4a—Freeze Duration: Increase freeze duration by 40%
Rank 4b—Squad Bonus: Squadmates gain Cryo Ammo at 50% effectiveness
Rank 5a—Ammo Capacity: Increase ammo capacity by 30%
Rank 5b—Headshot: Increase headshot damage by 35%
Rank 6a—Freeze Chance: Improve the odds of freezing a target by 50%; decrease a frozen target's movement speed by an additional 20%
Rank 6b—Damage Combo: Increase damage to frozen targets from all sources by 50%; weaken the armor of chilled targets by 25%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Cryo Ammo is a perfect tool for sniper-proficient Soldiers. Its freezing abilities can slow targets or even instantly shatter them if you get a headshot.

However, even if you don't plan on sniping and instead use it with pistols, SMGs, or shotguns, the slowing effects of Cryo Ammo can give a Soldier enough time to move on to the next target and weaken them as well.

When coupled with Adrenaline Rush, Cryo Ammo can render small groups of enemies into frozen, harmless ice sculptures.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, Disruptor Ammo can either increase duration (Rank 4a) or you can gain the ability to automatically grant it to all squadmates when active (Rank 4b).

Like Disruptor or Incendiary Ammo Rank 4 upgrade options, you can select Rank 4b in order to give your teammates a chance at freezing foes as well.

This will benefit Soldiers by allowing them to zoom in on frozen enemies or rush them and shatter them with a melee blow.

By selecting Rank 4a, you can ensure that enemies will stay frozen longer after sustaining a shot with Cryo Ammo.

Rank 5 Analysis

This rank upgrade is no different than ammo powers' Rank 5 upgrades. You can select to either carry 30 percent more ammunition or increase headshot damage by 25 percent.

To make the best use of this selection, take into account what type of Soldier you're building. If you've chosen the other headshot upgrades, select this one as well.

Otherwise, stick with the increased ammunition count.

Rank 6 Analysis

At Rank 6, you can either increase how effective Cryo Ammo is as a stand-alone damage-dealing power (Rank 6a) or increase damage to frozen enemies with all other attacks (Rank 6b).

If you plan to obliterate enemies with one shot, such as a sniper rifle shot or a single shotgun blast to the face, then select Rank 6a.

Soldiers who plan to weaken foes for the rest of the group should invest in Rank 6b.

Combat Mastery

Be an expert tactician on and off the battlefield. More speed. More strength. More charisma.

Rank 1—Reputation Bonus: 4%; Weapon Damage Bonus: 5%; Weight Capacity Bonus: 20
Rank 2—Influence and Damage: Increase weapon damage bonus by 5%; increase reputation bonus by 4%
Rank 3—Influence and Capacity: Increase weight capacity bonus by 30 points; increase reputation bonus by 4%
Rank 4a—Damage: Increase weapon damage by 5%; increase power damage by 10%
Rank 4b—Influence and Duration: Increase duration of all powers by 25%; increase reputation bonus by 8%
Rank 5a—Squad Bonus: Increase squadmate weapon damage by 20%
Rank 5b—Headshots: Increase headshot damage by 20%
Rank 6a—Weight Capacity: Increase weight capacity bonus by 50 points
Rank 6b—Weapon Master: Increase weapon damage bonus by 10%; increase damage of all ammo powers by 40%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

The increased weight capacity in Combat Mastery will make it easier for you to carry every kind of weapon at once.

As a weapon master, you should be able to carry every kind of weapon and switch between them with ease. Invest in this passive skill early in your career to maximize its potential.

Rank 4 Analysis

At this rank, you can begin to shape your Soldier build into either a full-on weapon master or a Soldier who relies more heavily on Adrenaline Rush (see suggested builds).

To maximize weapon damage, select Rank 4a. The damage increase to both weapon and powers will increase your destructive abilities on the battlefield.

Rank 4b will increase the duration of all other powers like Adrenaline Rush. Select this upgrade if you intend on using it often in battle.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5a will grant teammates increases in weapon damage. This will prove useful for Soldiers who rely on squad support the most.

For example, if you plan on sniping and need your team to bear the burden of keeping enemy fire off you, select this upgrade. Rank 5b will increase your headshot damage.

If you plan on using sniper or assault rifles, select this upgrade.

Rank 6 Analysis

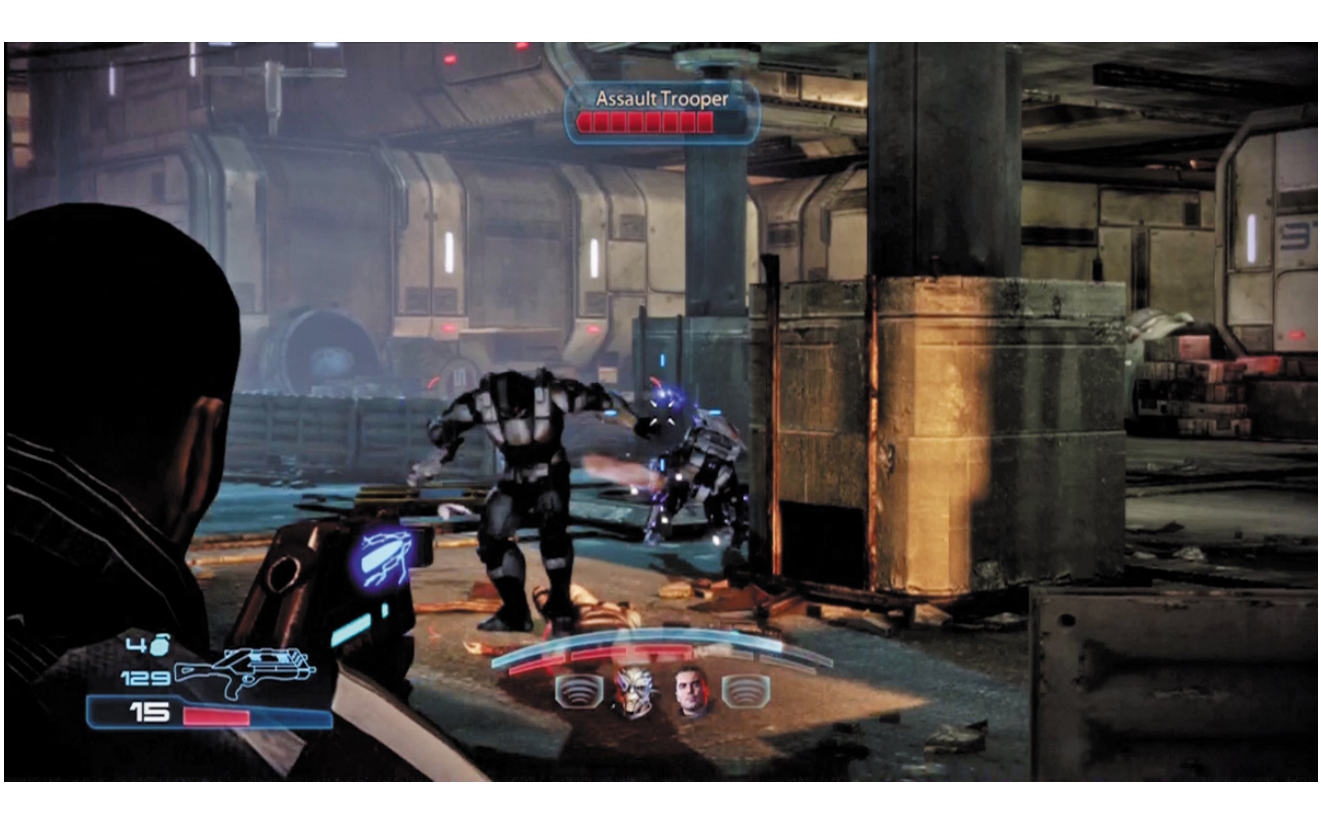
Both options in Rank 6 will allow you to make the best use of your weapons.

However, Rank 6a will increase your weight capacity in order to carry as many weapons as possible and, as a result, increase your power recharge speed.

If you don't plan on using powers often, then select Rank 6b, Weapon Master, and increase all weapon and power damage significantly.

BUILDS

Weapon Master



Assault Trooper
5
20m
4
36
5

Assault Trooper
4
8
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A weapon master Soldier relies on all weapons equally. As the name implies, this build is a master of all weapons, capable of switching back and forth between them to whatever is most useful at the time.

This build relies heavily on weapon damage; as a result, power damage takes a backseat.

Invest in Adrenaline Rush, Concussive Shot (to weaken foes), Frag Grenades, and all upgrades that affect weapon damage.

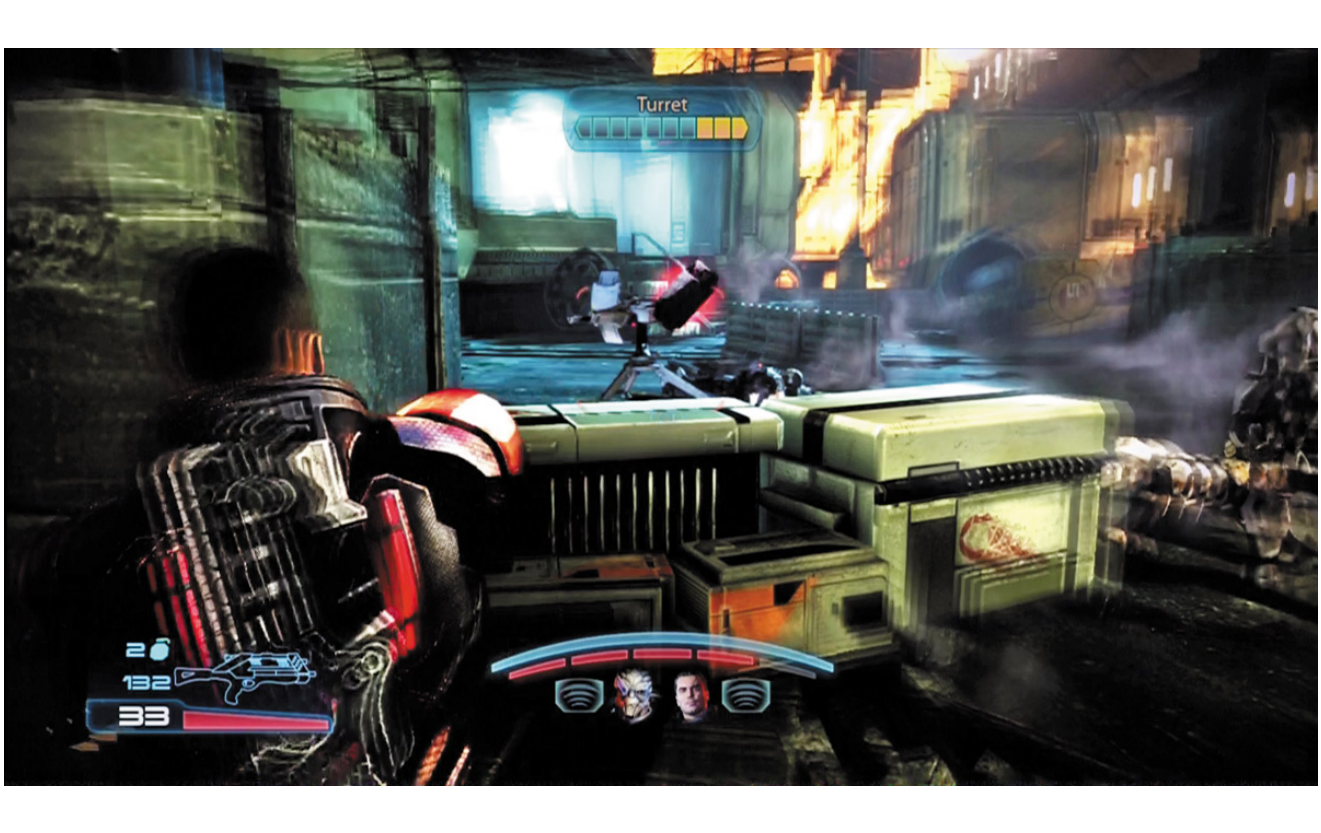
With more weapons equipped, you'll have a lower power recharge speed, so you won't be able to use powers like Concussive Shot or Adrenaline Rush frequently.

Luckily, you won't have to. Compensate for this by also investing in every ammo power.

You can activate ammo powers once before battle (or switch between them during battle) and not suffer any power recharge penalty.

Adrenaline Junkie

Turret
Secure Upper Streets
3
144
32



Turret
1
132
33

Adrenaline junkies rely heavily on Adrenaline Rush, using it nearly every minute during battle.

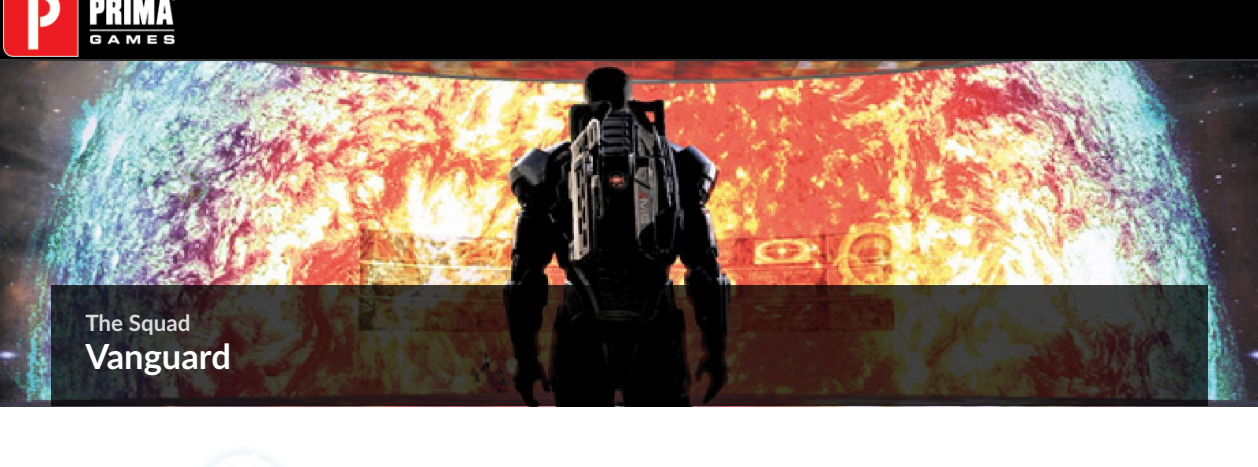
To thrive with this build, invest heavily in Adrenaline Rush and any upgrades that increase power duration and weight capacity.

That way, you can minimize your recharge speed penalty and activate Adrenaline Rush as often as you need to.

Keep your assault rifle ready to inflict damage at all ranges, and upgrade Concussive Shot as well as Cryo Ammo to disrupt enemies on the battlefield.

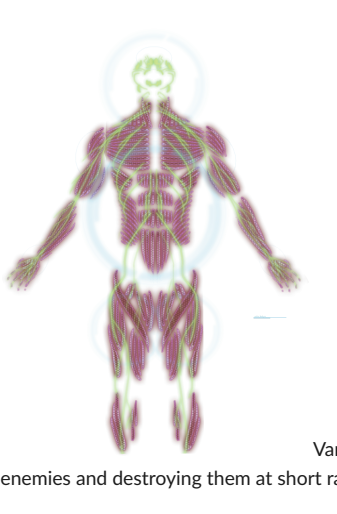
When upgraded to Rank 6b of Adrenaline Rush, you can launch devastating Concussive Shot attacks while time is slowed and follow up with Cryo Ammo–enabled assault rifle fire.

As soon as Adrenaline Shot wears off, activate it again to keep a leg up on the opposition.



The Squad

Vanguard



Vanguards are feared for their high-risk, high-reward combat style, closing in quickly on enemies and destroying them at short range with weapons and Biotic abilities.

They are outfitted with L5n implants, enabling them to perform a Biotic charge that strikes the opponent with incredible force while bringing the Vanguard in for close-range combat.

The Vanguard is a powerful class. A one-person wrecking ball, the Vanguard has a talent for quick, close-quarter combat that is unparalleled. In battle, a Vanguard relies heavily on two powers, Biotic Charge and Nova.

With Biotic Charge, the Vanguard can travel across the battlefield in the blink of an eye and instantly attack a target.

With the ability to close in quickly on foes, a Vanguard can benefit from strong close-quarter weapons like shotguns. However, assault rifles and SMGs are also a great complement to the damaging range and power of this class.

POWERS

Incendiary Ammo

Shoot and your enemy will burst into flames. Increases weapon damage, eats through armor, and can make an enemy panic.

Rank 1—Health damage: +10%; Armor damage: +10%

Rank 2—Panic: Improve the odds of panicking a target by 15%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase health and armor damage bonuses by 4%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase health and armor damage bonuses by 6%

Rank 4b—Squad Bonus: Squadmates gain Incendiary Ammo at 50% effectiveness

Rank 5a—Ammo Capacity: Increase ammo capacity by 30%

Rank 5b—Headshots: Increase headshot damage by 25%

Rank 6a—Damage: Increase health and armor damage bonuses by 10%

Rank 6b—Explosive Burst: Ignite enemies with an intermittent explosion that covers 2.5 meters for 100 damage

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Incendiary Ammo is a great power for a damage-dealer because it makes all weapon fire even more lethal. With Incendiary Ammo (or any Ammo power, in fact), it's best to activate it before every mission and make sure you keep it active at all times.

When active, it extends damage over time and sets enemies ablaze. It also functions as a "source" power that can be detonated using other powers like Biotic Charge.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, Incendiary Ammo can either increase damage to health and armor (Rank 4a), or you can gain the ability to automatically grant it to all squadmates when active (Rank 4b).

The choice really breaks down to whether you want to tank and dish out as much damage as you can or whether you will hang back as part of the squad.

If your squadmates don't have any ammo powers available to them, select Rank 4b to grant them use of yours. Otherwise, select Rank 4a and increase your ability to inflict as much damage as possible.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you can select to either carry 30 percent more ammunition or to increase headshot damage by 25 percent. To make the best use of this selection, take into account what types of weapons you will be using the most.

If you plan on using weapons like sniper rifles or assault rifles with high accuracy, then select Rank 5b. If you prefer to serve as the team's tank, equip yourself with a shotgun and select Rank 5a.

You'll benefit from the increased ammunition count when engaging enemies in close combat, the shotgun's best range.

Rank 6 Analysis

Both options in Rank 6 increase Incendiary Ammo's damage output. However, Rank 6a is for a health and armor damage increase across the board.

This makes all shots with Incendiary Ammo more powerful since it's a good general increase to overall damage.

Rank 6b adds an entirely new effect to shots taken using Incendiary Ammo. Instead of simply dealing more damage to health and armor, it ignites enemies and explodes, causing more damage in a wider radius and reaching more enemies nearby.

Your Rank 6 option should depend on whether you want to take down enemies one at a time or if you want to soften groups of enemies for the rest of your squad to finish off.

Cryo Ammo

Flash-freeze and shatter unprotected enemies. Slow down the rest. Weaken armor. Frozen targets won't regenerate health.

Rank 1—Freeze Duration: 3 sec.; Movement Speed: −15%; Armor Weakening: −25%

Rank 2—Freeze Chance: Improve the odds of freezing a target by 30%

Rank 3—Freeze Duration: Increase freeze duration by 40%

Rank 4a—Freeze Duration: Increase freeze duration by 40%

Rank 4b—Squad Bonus: Squadmates gain Cryo Ammo at 50% effectiveness

Rank 5a—Ammo Capacity: Increase ammo capacity by 30%

Rank 5b—Headshot: Increase headshot damage by 35%

Rank 6a—Freeze Chance: Improve the odds of freezing a target by 50%; decrease a frozen target's movement speed by an additional 20%

Rank 6b—Damage Combo: Increase damage to frozen targets from all sources by 50%; weaken the armor of chilled targets by 25%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Cryo Ammo is a perfect tool for pistol-toting Vanguards. Its freezing abilities can slow targets or even instantly shatter them if you get a headshot.

However, even if you don't plan on going for headshots and instead use the power with pistols, SMGs, or shotguns, then the effects of Cryo Ammo can slow an enemy just enough for you to finish them off with a Biotic Charge or Nova blast.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, Cryo Ammo can increase duration (Rank 4a), or you can gain the ability to automatically grant it to all squadmates when active (Rank 4b).

Like Disruptor Ammo's or Incendiary Ammo's Rank 4 upgrade options, you can select Rank 4b to give your teammates a chance at freezing foes as well.

This will benefit a Vanguard build, allowing your team to freeze foes on the battlefield, making it easier for you to rush in and kill them. By selecting Rank 4a, you can ensure that enemies will stay frozen longer after sustaining a shot with Cryo Ammo.

Rank 5 Analysis

This rank upgrade is no different than other ammo powers' Rank 5 upgrades. You can select to either carry 30 percent more ammunition or to increase headshot damage by 25 percent.

To make the best use of this selection, consider what type of Vanguard you're buidling. If you've chosen the other Headshot upgrades, select this one as well. Otherwise, stick with the increased ammunition count.

Rank 6 Analysis

At Rank 6, you can either increase how effective Cryo Ammo is as a stand-alone damage-dealing power (Rank 6a) or increase damage to frozen enemies with all other attacks (Rank 6b).

If you want to obliterate enemies with one shot, such as a sniper rifle shot or a single shotgun blast to the face, then select Rank 6a. Vanguards who plan to weaken foes for the rest of the group should invest in Rank 6b.

Pull

Yank an opponent helplessly off the ground.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 4 sec.; Duration: 4 sec.

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Duration: Increase duration by 40%

Rank 4a—Duration: Increase duration by 60%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 2 meters

Rank 5a—Lift Damage: Inflict 20 damage per second to lifted targets

Rank 5b—Expose: Increase all damage to targets lifted by Pull by 25%

Rank 6a—Double Pull: Launch two Pull projectiles to seek two targets instead of one

Rank 6b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

For a class that can rush an enemy instantly, it may be a bit odd having a power that can yank enemies closer to you. However, this is extremely helpful when trying to disrupt enemy movement on the battlefield.

Use Pull on a nearby foe to knock him off balance, then use Nova or Biotic Charge on another foe to create some distance. Alternate between targets like this and no enemy will have a steady enough hand to take a shot.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can increase the duration of Pull to knock enemies off balance for 60 percent longer (Rank 4a), or its radius can affect more nearby enemies (Rank 4b). If you want to focus on enemy disruption, then select Rank 4b.

The ability to affect more enemies can help your squad in nearly any combat situation. However, increasing the duration of the Pull effect will grant you more time to use Pull as a source power and trigger more explosive Biotic combos.

Rank 5 Analysis

Select Rank 5a to inflict additional damage on lifted targets, or choose Rank 5b to augment all damage on targets affected by lift.

If you frequently group with a squadmate who uses Singularity, select Rank 5b. If you want to focus on power damage, select Rank 5a.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Throw, Pull also has an upgrade option that allows you to affect two targets rather than one. Select Rank 6a to increase the disruptive abilities of your Pull power.

After all, more enemies off balance means less enemies that can attack.

Alternatively, if you want to use Pull more frequently on the battlefield, select Rank 6b. The increased recharge speed will lower the amount of time it takes before you can launch it again.

Biotic Charge (Unique)

Smash into a target while encased in a Biotic barrier, leveling your opponents. Invulnerable while this power is in effect.

Rank 1—17.5 sec.; Damage: 250; Force: 500 Newtons; Barrier Restored: 50%

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Force and Damage: Increase damage and force by 20%

Rank 4a—Force and Damage: Increase damage and force by 30%

Rank 4b—Radius: Hit up to 2 additional targets within 2 meters of the impact point

Rank 5a—Weapon Synergy: Increase weapon damage by 15% for 3 seconds after a successful Biotic Charge

Rank 5b—Power Synergy: Increase power damage by 25% for 15 seconds after a successful Biotic Charge

Rank 6a—Bonus Power: Give Biotic Charge a 25% chance of not triggering a cooldown

Rank 6b—Barrier: Increase barriers by an additional 50% after a successful Biotic Charge

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

A Vanguard's bread and butter, Biotic Charge can close the gap between a foe instantly, knocking him away or even obliterating him with a single blast.

It is useful as a stand-alone attack but can also be used to set up other attacks like Nova or heavy (charged) melee blows. Best of all, when taking damage, use Biotic Charge to get away from enemy fire and simultaneously replenish your shields.

Rank 4 Analysis

If you want to use Biotic Charge as a stand-alone attack to flatten one enemy at a time, select Rank 4a. To widen the Charge's reach, select Rank 4b. The increased reach of the Biotic impact will hit two more foes within 2 meters.

Rank 4b won't inflict as much damage, but since you can reach more enemies you'll be able to wreak more havoc on the battlefield.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5 you must choose which other types of attacks you will rely on. Since Vanguards can excel at either power or weapon combat, choose which style you prefer to use in battle.

For example, if you will follow Biotic Charge with a shotgun blast, select Rank 5a. If instead you prefer to use Nova to follow up a Biotic Charge, then select Rank 5b.

There's no reason you can't follow up a Biotic Charge with both a weapon blast and a power. But one must come first. Make your choice here based on which attack will immediately follow the Biotic Charge.

Rank 6 Analysis

Rank 6a will grant you a 25 percent chance to not experience any recharge penalty. This will allow you to instantly follow up with another power usage, like another Biotic Charge, Nova, or Pull.

This upgrade choice is best for Vanguard players who plan on using a lot of power combinations.

If you want to maintain 50 percent of your barriers, rather than deplete them all after using a Biotic Charge, then select Rank 6b. This will also help when following up with a Nova blast immediately afterward.

Shockwave

Topple a row of enemies with this cascading shockwave.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 8 sec.; Damage: 200; Force: 600 Newtons; Radius: 2 meters; Range: 7 meters

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 20%

Rank 3—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 30%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 35%

Rank 5a—Detonate: Increase force and damage of Biotic detonations by 50%

Rank 5b—Reach: Increase the distance that Shockwave cascades by 50%

Rank 6a—Recharge Speed: Increases recharge speed by 35%

Rank 6b—Lifting Shockwave: Suspends targets in the air for a short time

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Shockwave is another disruptive ability in a Vanguard's arsenal. Like Throw, it can hurl enemies out of the way and clear a path forward. Unlike Throw, however, this power doesn't stop at affecting one or two enemies.

It also does not travel around objects or other enemies. Shockwave travels in a straight line and for a long distance, affecting all enemies in its path.

This makes it a particularly useful power for Vanguards who want to focus on disruption rather than destruction. Of course, Shockwave is also a detonator power, so it can be used to trigger explosive combos as well.

Rank 4 Analysis

Like most other powers, you can select to either increase the force and damage (Rank 4a) to inflict more damage on enemies and hurl them farther, or increase its radius (Rank 5b), allowing each Shockwave to reach more enemies.

Your choice depends on whether you want to cause more damage or disrupt more enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

If you select Rank 5a, you can increase the force and damage of Biotic combinations when using Shockwave as a detonator power. Select this if you plan on often using Shockwave as part of explosive biotic combos.

If you plan on using Shockwave as a disruptive ability only, then select Rank 5b. This will let the Shockwave travel farther before it dissipates.

Rank 6 Analysis

At Rank 6a, you can increase the recharge speed of Shockwave in order to use it more frequently. At Rank 6b, you can add an additional "lift" ability to raise affected foes off the ground for a short time.

While this may not seem like a big deal, the additional lift ability will help combo off power upgrades like Pull's Lift upgrades.

Nova (Unique)

Transfer the energy of your Biotic barrier to charge and spark this deadly blast. Barrier strength determines blast density.

Rank 1—Damage: 350; Force: 450 Newtons; Radius: 4 meters

Rank 2—Radius: Increase impact radius by 25%

Rank 3—Force and Damage: Increase damage and force by 30%

Rank 4a—Force and Damage: Increase damage and force by 40%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 40%

Rank 5a—Power Recharge: Increase recharge speed of all powers by 25% for 15 seconds

Rank 5b—Half Blast: Gain the option to use Nova two times in a row by reducing its barrier consumption by 50% but at the cost of reducing damage and force by 40%

Rank 6a—Pierce: Increase damage to barriers, shields, and armored targets by 100%

Rank 6b—Sustain: Nova gains a 25% chance of not using up barriers

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Nova is a great power to use as a lead-in attack or is a perfect complement to attack combos that start with Biotic Charge.

When you unleash this power, you use up your barriers and transfer their charge into a powerful radial shock wave that knocks enemies away from you. Alone, this power can leave you at a vulnerable disadvantage.

However, when coupled with Biotic Charge, which replenishes shields, you'll have an unstoppable one-two combination.

If you plan on using Nova as a stand-alone attack, then at least upgrade to Rank 3, where you'll gain a power capable of dealing 455 points of damage across a 5-meter radius.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4a, you can increase the force and damage that your Nova attack unleashes. This will increase the damage to nearly 600 points of damage per blast. This upgrade is best for people who want to focus primarily on damage-dealing.

To concentrate more on disrupting foes, select Rank 4b. The increase in radius will allow you to reach farther at the point of impact and knock away more enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5a is a straightforward power recharge upgrade for all powers. After using Nova, all powers will recharge 25 percent faster for 15 seconds.

That means you can link together power combos for 15 seconds after the Nova blast, with increased efficiency. This is an obvious choice for players who will concentrate mainly on power combinations while rushing about the battlefield.

Rank 5b, however, reduces Nova's barrier consumption by half (and its damage and force by 40 percent). The upside, though, is that you gain the ability to launch Nova twice in a row before completely depleting your shields.

Rank 6 Analysis

For Vanguard players who want to increase damage on protected enemies, Rank 6a is an easy choice. The increase in piercing damage is perfect for pesky foes that have shields, barriers, and armor.

Sustain, Rank 6b, gives you a 25 percent chance to not use any barriers at all. Between this upgrade and Rank 5b, tricky Vanguards will be able to unleash a devastating string of Nova blasts on unsuspecting enemies until they're dead.

Assault Mastery

Be an expert tactician on and off the battlefield. Faster and stronger powers. More weapon damage. More dexterity. More charisma.

Rank 1—Reputation Bonus: 4%; Weapon Damage Bonus: 2.5%; Power Damage Bonus: 5%; Weight Capacity Bonus: 15

Rank 2—Influence and Capacity: Increase reputation bonus by 4%; increase weight capacity by 20 points

Rank 3—Influence and Damage: Increase power damage bonus by 5%; increase weapon damage bonus by 2.5%; increase reputation bonus by 4%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase weapon damage by 5%; increase power damage by 10%

Rank 4b—Influence and Force: Increase force bonus by 30%; increase reputation bonus by 8%

Rank 5a—Squad Bonus: Increase squadmate weapon damage by 10%; increase power damage by 15%

Rank 5b—Weight Capacity: Increase weight capacity bonus by 35 points

Rank 6a—Shotgun Damage: Increase shotgun damage by 15%

Rank 6b—Power Intensity: Increase power damage bonus by 25%; increase power duration and force by 25%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

The increased weight capacity in Assault Mastery will make it easier for you to carry heavier weapons like shotguns. For Vanguards who want to focus on weapon damage, this passive power is a must.

Rank 4 Analysis

At this rank, you can choose to either increase damage output (Rank 4a) or force and reputation bonus (Rank 4b).

Vanguards who want to maximize their destructive capabilities with weapons and powers should invest in Rank 4a.

If you want to make better use of the force from your powers like Throw, Shockwave, and Biotic Charge, then select Rank 4b.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5a will grant teammates increases in power and weapon damage. This will prove useful for Vanguards who rely on squad support the most.

For example, if you want your team to keep enemies engaged while you rush across the battlefield, select this upgrade.

Rank 5b will increase your weight capacity, allowing you to carry heavier weapons while keeping your power recharge speed low. Invest in Rank 5b in order to be able to launch Biotic Charge and other powers in quick succession.

Rank 6 Analysis

Vanguard builds that will make frequent use of the shotgun (see builds below) should invest in Rank 6a. The increase to shotgun damage is critical.

However, if you will follow your Biotic Charge with power attacks like Nova, then select Rank 6b, as this rank upgrade's increase to power damage, duration, and force will help power combinations the most.

BUILDS

Charger: Power Combo

All Vanguard builds should begin with Biotic Charge as their main power. This is the skill that will inflict the most damage up front and serve as the lead-in to your follow-up attacks.

Invest in Biotic Charge, Nova, Shockwave, and any melee-related upgrades. That way, you can rush in for the attack with Biotic Charge and follow up with Nova.

Since Nova will deplete your shields, you can immediately follow up with Biotic Charge again to replenish your shields. When facing tough enemies like Brutes, you can also follow Nova with a charged melee blow while enemies are staggered.

Once upgraded to a high level, Vanguards can single-handedly destroy Brutes and Banshees using Biotic Charge/Nova/melee combos.

Charger: Weapon Damage

Assault Trooper
Health

If you'd rather not rely on powers and prefer weapon damage, then instead invest points in Biotic Charge, Pull, and both ammo powers. Activate your ammo powers, then use Biotic Charge to rush foes.

Once staggered, follow up with powerful shotgun blasts at close range to inflict maximum damage. If they try to get away or if Biotic Charge flings them too far away, then follow up with Pull to bring them in close and blast them with the shotgun again.

The Squad

Ashley Williams

Lieutenant Commander Ashley Williams is a career military officer with the Systems Alliance. Born in 2158 to a military family, Williams enlisted directly out of high school, splitting time between Earth and hostile environment training on Titan.

After earning numerous commendations early in her career, Williams became a platoon guide on Eden Prime, where she was the only member of her unit to survive the geth attack.

Williams then served as gunnery chief under Commander Shepard on the SSV Normandy and was promoted to lieutenant commander after the Battle of the Citadel. More recently, an Alliance tribunal called on Williams to testify about her experience with the Reapers.

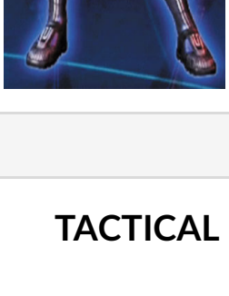
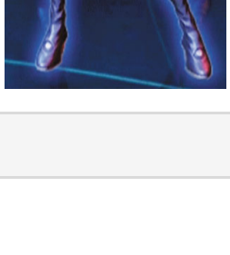
PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

Ashley is a returning character from *Mass Effect 1* and *Mass Effect 2* . Part of Shepard's crew in ME1, she's returning again to join Shepard's crew.

However, she's increasingly suspicious of Shepard's methods. Shepard must regain the trust of this old friend (and potential former lover).

NOTE

You can recruit either Kaidan or Ashley to your crew based on your Crew Loss decision at the beginning of the game. You cannot recruit both.

	
Uniform 1	Uniform 2

TACTICAL ROLE

Ashley is a good soldier. As a rifle-proficient squadmate, she prefers to stay between mid- to long-range, depending on which rifle is her primary weapon.

She's well rounded enough to be a squad mainstay when carrying an assault rifle as her primary weapon, but her Marksman and Alliance Officer powers can also make her a skilled sniper if you need a specialized soldier during tough missions.

Even though she may not look as tough and rugged as someone like James, she is also capable of occasionally tanking.

Upgrade powers like Concussive Shot, Alliance Officer, and Inferno Grenades, and she'll be able to march forward, causing damage wherever she goes.

If you want to make her a well-balanced soldier, consider upgrading her powers equally as much as possible.

She won't excel in power damage, but her weapon damage and toughness will complement nearly any squad composition.

POWERS

CONCUSSIVE SHOT

Flatten your enemy with a precise blast at short or long range. Effective against barriers.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 10 sec.; Damage: 100; Force: 300 Newtons

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 30%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 1.5 meters

Rank 5a—Shatter: Increase force and damage to frozen targets by 100%

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 35%

Rank 6a—Amplification: Power Concussive Shot with the properties of the active ammo power, enabling it to burn, freeze, disrupt, warp, or pierce armor

Rank 6b—Shredder: Increase damage to organics by 100% over 10 seconds; increase force by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Concussive Shot is a lot more than just another burst from your weapon of choice. With a single blast of Concussive Shot, you can disrupt an enemy's progress, knock them down, or deplete their protective barrier.

At Rank 3, Concussive Shot can dish out 100 points of damage and 300 Newtons of force. When paired with a source power like Incinerate, Concussive Shot is the perfect detonator.

Rank 4 Analysis

Like most other powers with explosive or concussive abilities, the first upgrade choice is to either increase the power's effects, in this case force and damage (Rank 4a), or increase its radius (Rank 4b). Select your upgrade based on Ashley's eventual build.

If you want to shape her into a formidable weapon damage dealer, select Rank 4a. This will inflict more damage per Concussive Shot.

By selecting Rank 4b, she can knock more enemies down per shot but inflict less damage. This option is helpful in squads that favor disrupting enemies before killing them.

Rank 5 Analysis

If you plan on grouping Ashley with Cryo-friendly squadmates, select Rank 5a. Shatter will affect only those foes that have been frozen or chilled using Cryo Blast or Cryo Ammo. If you don't favor Cryo users in your squad, then select Rank 5b.

The increased recharge speed for Concussive Shot will ensure you're able to knock down enemies all over the battlefield with less time spent waiting for your power to ready.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Rank 5a, Rank 6a takes other powers into account in order to function. At Rank 6a, Amplification will power Concussive Shot with ammo powers like Cryo or Warp Ammo.

Since Ashley also has Disruptor Ammo, Rank 6a will automatically imbue Concussive Shot with disruptor abilities when Disruptor Ammo is active.

However, when paired with squadmates like James who are capable of giving squadmates Incendiary Ammo, this upgrade will also imbue those ammo effects on each Concussive Shot.

If you vary your squad composition often, then you may not be paired with squadmates like James often enough to benefit from Rank 6a.

In that case, select Rank 6b, Shredder. This upgrade adds a damage-over-time effect to every shot and increases the force of each Concussive Shot, allowing you to knock down tougher enemies.

DISRUPTOR AMMO

Bring down your enemy's barriers and shields. Chance to stun. More weapon damage. More damage to shields and barriers.

Rank 1—Health Damage Bonus: +5%; Shield and Barrier Damage: +20%

Rank 2—Stun: Improve the odds of stunning a target by 15%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase health damage bonus by 2%. Increase shield and barrier damage bonuses by 8%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase health damage bonus by 3%; increase shield and barrier damage bonuses by 12%

Rank 4b—Squad Bonus: Squadmates gain Disruptor Ammo at 50% effectiveness

Rank 5a—Ammo Capacity: Increase ammo capacity by 30%

Rank 5b—Headshot: Increase headshot damage by 25%

Rank 6a—Damage: Increase health damage bonus by 5%; increase shield and barrier damage bonuses by 20%

Rank 6b—Stun: Improve the odds of stunning a target by 25%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Disruptor Ammo is a great power for a damage dealer like Ashley because it makes all weapon fire even more lethal. With Disruptor Ammo (or any Ammo power, in fact), it's best to activate it before every mission and make sure you keep it active at all times.

When active, it adds the ability to stun foes and incapacitate them before they can attack. It also functions as a "source" power that can be detonated using other powers like Concussive Shot.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, Disruptor Ammo can increase damage to health and armor (4a), or you can gain the ability to automatically grant it to all squadmates when active (4b).

The choice really breaks down to whether you want Ashley to tank and dish out as much damage as you can or whether she will hang back as part of the squad.

If you're playing as a class that does not have an Ammo power (Cryo Ammo, Warp Ammo, or Incendiary Ammo), you can select Rank 4b and gain the use of Ashley's Disruptor Ammo when she's on a mission with you.

Otherwise, select Rank 4a and increase her ability to inflict as much damage as possible and deplete enemy shields and barriers.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5 you can select to either carry 30% more ammunition or to increase headshot damage by 25%. To make the best use of this selection, take into account what types of weapons Ashley will carry into battle most frequently.

Ashley can carry a sniper rifle and can use the Marksman power to increase her sniping skills, so select Rank 4b to make her a more deadly sniper-class squadmate.

You can also select it if you frequently task her with attacking from a distance with an assault rifle.

If you prefer Ashley to serve as the team's tank, equip her with an assault rifle and select Rank 4a. She'll benefit from the increased ammunition count when engaging enemies in mid- to close-range combat.

Rank 6 Analysis

Both options in Rank 6 increase Disruptor Ammo's damage output. However, Rank 6a increases damage to health, barriers, and shields, depending on the enemy.

This makes all shots with Disruptor Ammo all the more powerful since it's a good general increase to overall damage. Rank 6b adds an entirely new effect to shots taken using Disruptor Ammo.

Instead of simply dealing more damage to health, shields, and barriers, it stuns enemies and incapacitates them, allowing your team to take out vulnerable, stunned foes.

Your Rank 6 option should depend on whether you want her to take down enemies one at a time, or if you want to use her as a crowd-controller, weakening, and stunning enemies for the rest of the squad to finish off.

INFERNO GRENADE (UNIQUE)

Cluster-bomb a small area with incendiary munitions.

Rank 1—Damage Per Second: 75; Duration: 8 sec.; Radius: 5 meters

Rank 2—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 1

Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 30%

Rank 5a—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 2

Rank 5b—Damage: Increase damage by 40%

Rank 6a—Armor Damage: Increases damage to armor by 50%

Rank 6b—Radius and Shrapnel: Increase impact radius by 40%; increase shrapnel by 1 fragment

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Inferno Grenades are useful in nearly all combat situations. At Ranks 1 through 3, a well-aimed grenade can serve as a great medium- to long-range weapon. Hurl it ahead of you and inflict damage on unsuspecting foes.

These grenades don't just explode like typical frag grenades; they explode into smaller clusters of explosions that also deal fire damage while covering a larger radius than typical grenades.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4 you can choose to increase either the damage output or the damage radius. If you want to concentrate on dishing out maximum damage, choose Rank 4a.

However, Rank 4b will increase the impact radius of your grenades and their cluster bombs, allowing you to damage more enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5 allows you to either increase the amount of grenades you can carry or increase the damage dealt by 40 percent.

For players who want to be offensive powerhouses, consider carrying more grenades. Rank 5a will ensure that you always have plenty of grenades for nearly all combat scenarios.

Ashley is essentially a Soldier, so the more ammunition and explosives she has, the better. Rank 5b, however, can also help maximize damage to targets.

The incendiary effect left by the grenade's cluster explosions can add a significant amount of damage to enemies, especially if you've chosen Rank 4b—increase in impact radius.

At Rank 5b, your Inferno Grenades can potentially inflict up to 142.5 points of damage per second (if you've chosen Rank 4a).

Rank 6 Analysis

At maximum rank, players can increase either armor-damaging abilities (Rank 6a) or radius and shrapnel effects (Rank 6b).

Both options are worthwhile upgrades, so decide on whether you want to focus on dealing damage to armored enemies or inflicting less damage on armored enemies at the cost of damaging more enemies across a larger radius.

MARKSMAN (UNIQUE)

Boost weapon accuracy and firing rate for a short time.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 20 sec.; Duration: 6 sec.; Rate of fire: 30%; Accuracy Bonus: 30%

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Duration: Increase duration by 30%

Rank 4a—Accuracy: Increase accuracy bonus by 30%

Rank 4b—Firing Rate: Increase firing rate bonus by 25%

Rank 5a—Duration: Increase duration by 40%

Rank 5b—Headshot: Increase headshot damage by 25%

Rank 6a—Accuracy and Firing Rate: Increase accuracy and firing rate bonuses by 20%

Rank 6b—Recharge: Increase recharge speed by 40%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

The Marksman power is specifically designed to augment Ashley's weapon skills. Since Ashley is not as adept in power-based combat as someone like Liara, this skill is perfectly suited for her, as she'll be able to increase damage and accuracy with both types of rifles.

Upgrade this to Rank 3, at least, if you plan on ever using her in a squad. The increased accuracy, when active, will help maximize her efficiency.

At Rank 3, she'll have nearly eight seconds of improved accuracy and firing rate.

TIP

Marksman is a better power for assault rifles than sniper rifles since it increases rate of fire, so it's better for fast-firing weapons. However, Rank 5b is a must if you ever plan on using a sniper-proficient Ashley on your team.

Rank 4 Analysis

Players who want Ashley to concentrate on sniping and long-range precision shooting should select Rank 4a. This will increase her accuracy by 30 percent and make sniping all the more effective.

If you want Ashley to concentrate on assault rifle use, then select Rank 4b.

The increased rate of fire will make most assault rifles more effective and will help compensate for assault rifles with a low rate of fire.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you can choose to either make Ashley a better shooter for a longer period of time (Rank 5a) or increase her headshot damage by 25 percent (Rank 5b).

The choice here is simple. If you plan on using Ashley more frequently in a sharpshooter role, sniping enemies from a distance and covering the squad's approach, then select Rank 5b. For general, all-purpose use, select Rank 5a and activate this power whenever necessary.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final upgrade, Rank 6, will increase either Ashley's accuracy and firing fate (Rank 6a) or the recharge speed for the Marksman power (Rank 6b). If you chose Rank 4b, then select Rank 6a here. It'll boost accuracy to an impressive 80 percent.

If you chose Rank 4a, Rank 6a will increase rate of fire to 70 percent. Helpful, but it may lead to problems with ammunition count.

Select Rank 6b if you want to use Ashley's Marskman power frequently on the battlefield.

ALLIANCE OFFICER (UNIQUE)

Boost weapon damage, health, and shields/barriers.

Rank 1—Health and Shield Bonus: 15%; Power Damage Bonus: 15%

Rank 2—Damage and Durability: Increase health, shield, and power damage bonuses by 15%

Rank 3—Damage and Durability: Increase health, shield, and power damage bonuses by 15%

Rank 4a—Weapon Damage: Increase weapon damage by 30%

Rank 4b—Durability: Increase health and shields by 30%

Rank 5a—Power Damage: Increase power damage by 20%

Rank 5b—Sniper Rifles: Increase sniper rifle damage by 45%

Rank 6a—Squad Bonus: Increase squadmate Tech and Biotic power damage by 10%

Rank 6b—Assault Rifles: Increase assault rifle damage by 60%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

At Ranks 1 through 3, Alliance Officer increases Ashley's damage and durability up to 45 percent across the board. These three upgrades alone make it possible for her to tank a little bit during missions.

However, the increase in weapon damage also makes it possible for her to rely more on her rifles and less on power damage. If you want her to be on the front lines of battle, then upgrade at least to Rank 3 for this passive power.

Rank 4 Analysis

Players who want Ashley to tank should select Rank 4b. This will increase her health and shield bonus to an impressive 75 percent. She will be able to take more damage and last a little bit longer in heated firefights, taking some of the heat off weaker squadmates.

If you want to make her a weapon damage specialist, select Rank 4a. This increases her weapon damage to 45 percent bonus, making her even more deadly with high-powered rifles.

Rank 5 Analysis

Both options in Rank 5 increase her ability to deal damage. Rank 5a augments Ashley's power damage by 20 percent, making powers like Concussive Shot and Inferno Grenade increasingly deadly.

Similarly, Rank 5b augments Ashley's sniper rifle damage, making her an even better sharpshooter. If you're going to invest in her Marksman power, then be sure to select Rank 5b here to complement her sniper rifle skills.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Rank 5, this rank can also augment her weapon skills. Rank 6 is a squad bonus upgrade. Either increase your squad's weapon damage (6a) or increase the damage output from assault rifles (6b).

If you want to focus on Ashley's weapon proficiencies and selected Rank 5b, then select Rank 6b as well. Between both weapon-specific upgrades, she'll never be at a loss as long as she has a rifle in her hands.

BUILD OPTIONS

Weapon Damage/Tank Specialist

- **Inferno Grenade:** 4a, 5b, 6a or 6b
- **Disruptor Ammo:** 4a, 5a, 6a
- **Concussive Shot:** 4a, 6a or 6b
- **Marksman:** 4b, 5a, 6a
- **Alliance Officer:** 4a, 5a or 5b, 6b

If you want Ashley to maximize her weapon-damage potential, invest heavily in as many of her powers as possible.

Nearly every aspect of her power trees helps augment weapon damage ratings and rate of fire. To supplement her skills as a Soldier, she also has the use of Inferno Grenades.

These small cluster grenades add another destructive element to Ashley's arsenal, allowing her to cover a larger area with less ammunition.

TACTICAL SHARPSHOOTER

- **Overload:** 4a, 5a or 5b
- **Disruptor Ammo:** 5b, 6b
- **Concussive Shot:** 5a, 6a
- **Marksman:** 4a, 5b, 6a
- **Alliance Officer:** 4a, 5b, 6b

Few crew members have the powers needed to excel in long-range sniping and precision sharpshooting. Ashley is one of them. Marksman, Disruptor Ammo, and Alliance Officer all have options to increase accuracy and especially sniper rifle skills.

Select these to increase Ashley's efficiency with the sniper rifle. While on missions, place her at elevated points or at long-range from enemy positions—preferably behind good cover—and let her pick off foes from afar.

This will let you and the rest of your squad advance as needed or execute other tactical maneuvers.

ROMANCE

Ashley is a romance option for male Shepard. She can be romanced by a new Shepard as well as a Shepard who did not romance her in previous games.

Because she is in the hospital for much of the early game, taking time to go to the Citadel and visit her is the key to building up intimacy.

KEY CONVERSATIONS

On Mars, Ashley remains distrustful of Shepard and his relationship with Cerberus. While it's tempting to get angry with her, choosing the gentler options allows Shepard to defend himself without alienating Ashley.

Later, Shepard has multiple chances to visit her in the hospital: immediately after arriving at the Citadel for the first time (she is unconscious but will learn that Shepard came to see her), after completing the mission at Palaven (Ashley is in bed and injured), and once more before finishing the Genophage missions (after she is up on her feet, preparing to be discharged).

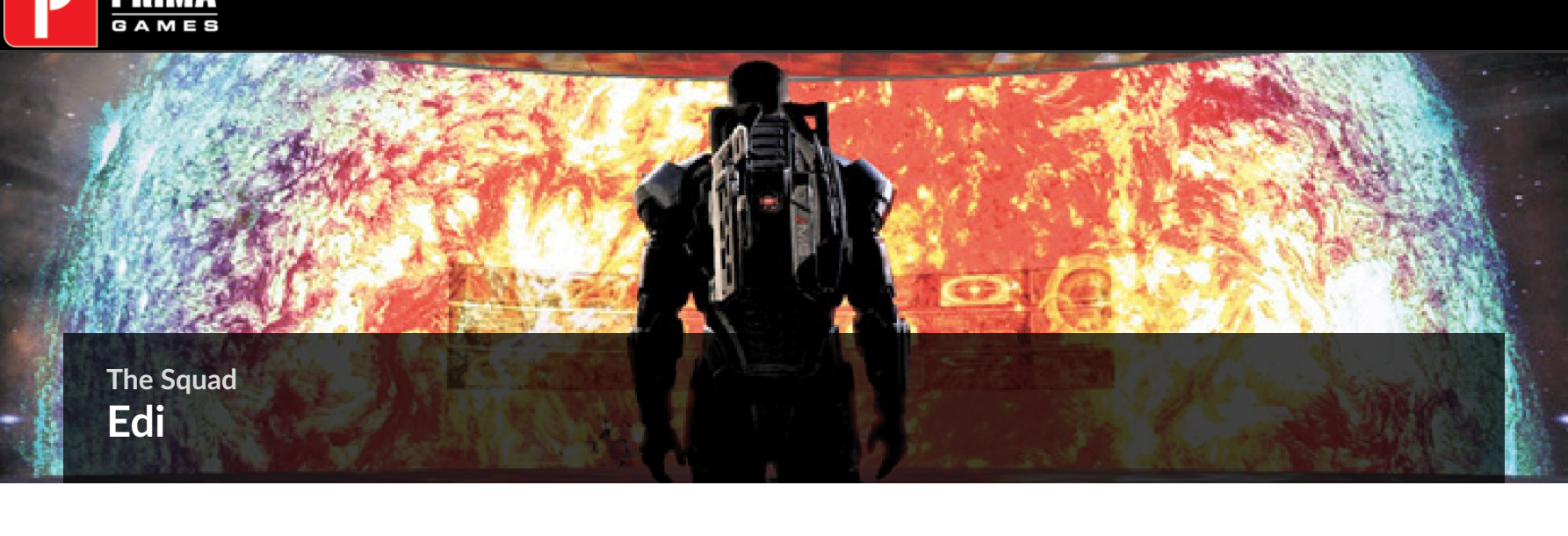
These conversations give Shepard the chance to build up intimacy and to build up a level of trust to ensure that she won't force Shepard to kill her in the confrontation on the Citadel.

TIP

Shepard can also bring Ashley a present in the hospital; purchase the works of Tennyson to increase intimacy. If Shepard had a relationship with Ashley in *Mass Effect 1* , but subsequently pursued another relationship in *Mass Effect 2* , Ashley is angry and hurt during her talks at the hospital. Apologize and make it clear that you want to be with her. This is key to continuing a relationship and getting back her trust.

KEY MOMENT

Ashley offers to meet Shepard on the Citadel at the café on the Presidium Commons. If Shepard has a very high intimacy, she brings up the possibility of a serious relationship. If Shepard has been less personal with her, Ashley doesn't bring it up, but Shepard can suggest it.



Edi

The Enhanced Defense Intelligence, or EDI, serves as an information source and cyberwarfare defense system on the rebuilt Normandy SR-2. The ship's crew can access EDI at any terminal or through radio contact.

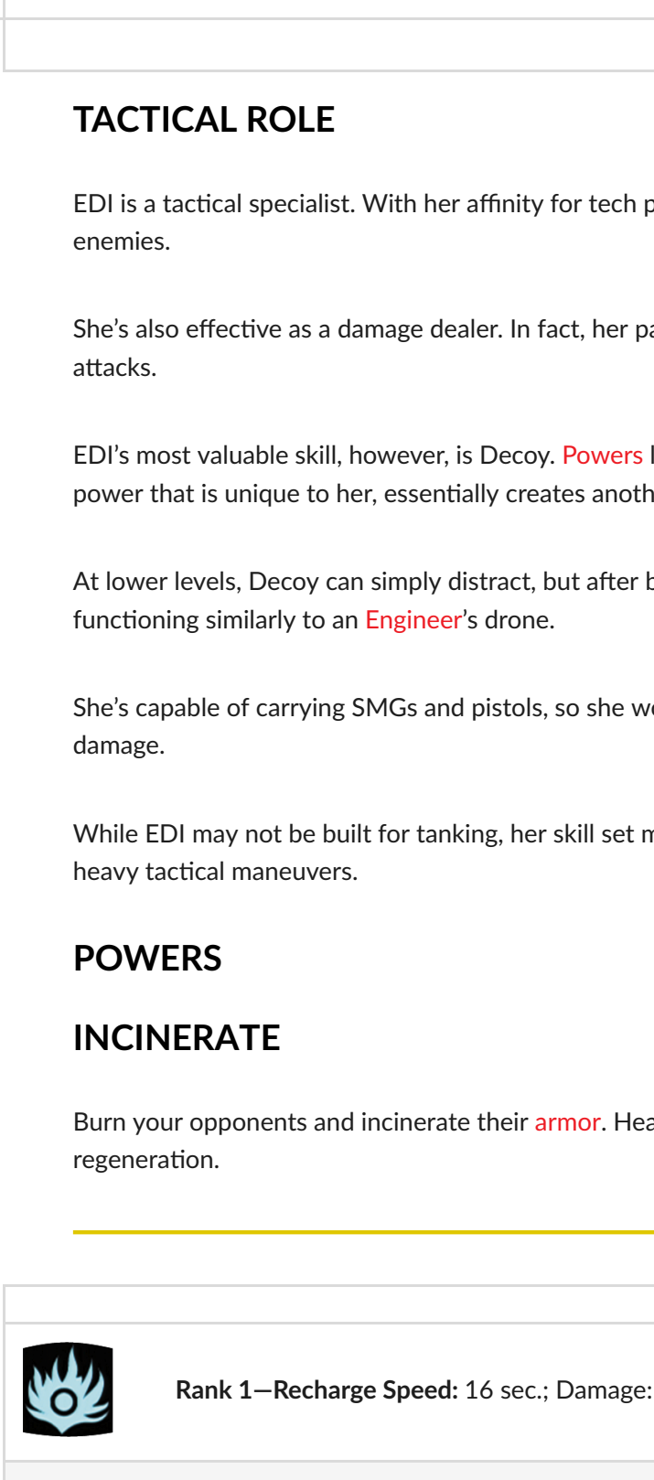
During an attack from a Collector vessel, pilot Jeff "Joker" Moreau gave EDI full access to the Normandy's systems, allowing the ship to escape.

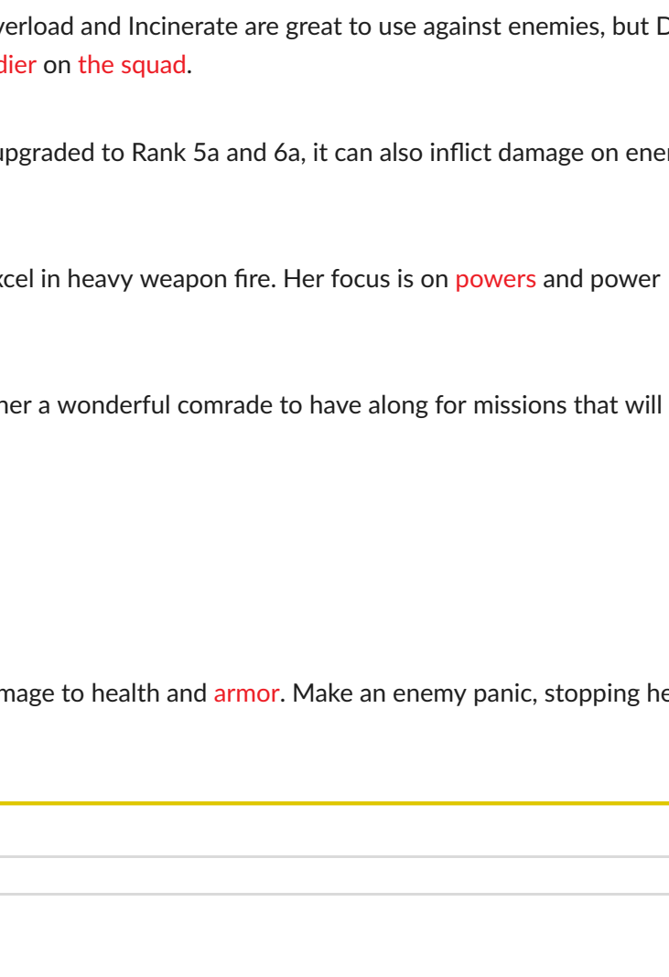
Although EDI retains the control that Moreau gave her, she is usually content to advise the organic crew members who fly and maintain the ship.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

EDI is a returning character from *Mass Effect 2* . In *Mass Effect 3* , the Normandy's Enhanced Defense Intelligence has remote control over a Cerberus-designed infiltration unit.

The body was once fully covered with skin to allow it to pass as human, but now it has been stripped down to a smooth, skeletal frame. Freed of excess weight, EDI can move the body with a dancer's grace, and its tough chassis makes it suitable for combat.





TACTICAL ROLE

EDI is a tactical specialist. With her affinity for tech power damage and skills like Decoy, EDI can both distract and disable enemies.

She's also effective as a damage dealer. In fact, her passive power helps increase her damage output to tech and power-based attacks.

EDI's most valuable skill, however, is Decoy. Powers like Overload and Incinerate are great to use against enemies, but Decoy, a power that is unique to her, essentially creates another soldier on the squad.

At lower levels, Decoy can simply distract, but after being upgraded to Rank 5a and 6a, it can also inflict damage on enemies, functioning similarly to an Engineer's drone.

She's capable of carrying SMGs and pistols, so she won't excel in heavy weapon fire. Her focus is on powers and power damage.

While EDI may not be built for tanking, her skill set makes her a wonderful comrade to have along for missions that will require heavy tactical maneuvers.

POWERS

INCINERATE

Burn your opponents and incinerate their armor. Heavy damage to health and armor. Make an enemy panic, stopping health regeneration.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 16 sec.; Damage: 300

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%.

Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 2 meters

Rank 5a—Burning Damage: Increase damage by an additional 40% over 8 seconds

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 6a—Freeze Combo: Increase damage to frozen and chilled targets by an additional 100%

Rank 6b—Armor Damage: Increase damage to armored targets by 50%

Ranks 1 to 3 Analysis

Incinerate is one of EDI's most destructive powers. Because it can function as both a source and a detonator power, it is always a good idea to upgrade this to at least Rank 3.

That way, EDI can create explosive combinations with other team members. Of course, you can also use it as a destructive, stand-alone power. If that's your goal, don't stop upgrading at Rank 3.

Rank 4 Analysis

Rank 4 Analysis To increase the damage output of Incinerate up to 450 points of damage, select Rank 4a. The 30 percent increase is substantial enough to take down lesser enemies while inflicting large amounts of damage on tougher foes.

Your other option is to increase the impact radius of Incinerate in order to scorch more enemies with every blast.

Your choice here should depend on whether you want EDI to be a main damage-dealer or to complement the rest of the squad by softening multiple enemies at once.

Rank 5 Analysis

Players hoping to maximize Incinerate's damage potential should invest in Rank 5a, Burning Damage. This upgrade increases the damage over time and burns enemies past the initial impact of the shot.

When coupled with Incendiary Ammo or other detonator powers, this combination can lead to dazzling explosive results. Your other option at Rank 5 is to increase the recharge speed of Incinerate.

This will allow EDI to use Incinerate more often in battle and make her a deadly weapon, especially in squads with Biotic specialists.

Rank 6 Analysis

An ironic power upgrade, Rank 6a increases damage to frozen and chilled targets by an additional 100 percent. So if you frequently use squadmates with Cryo Ammo or Cryo Blast, select this rank upgrade to complement their powers.

If you don't frequently use those freezing skills, then don't waste precious upgrade points on Rank 6a. Instead, use those points on Rank 6b and gain a very useful damage increase to armored targets.

OVERLOAD

Overload electronics with this power surge, stunning your enemy. It is effective against shields, barriers, and synthetics but not as effective against organics.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 16 sec.; Damage: 220

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Chain Overload: Hit one additional target within 8 meters with 60% less damage

Rank 4b—Damage: Increase damage by 30%

Rank 5a—Neural Shock: Incapacitate weaker organic enemies for a short duration

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 6a—Chain Overload: Increase damage by 15%. Hit one additional target within 8 meters with 60% less damage

Rank 6b—Shield Damage: Increase damage to barriers and shields by an additional 100%

Ranks 1 to 3 Analysis

By far one of the most useful powers against synthetics, Overload can temporarily fry electrical equipment like turrets and can singe synthetic foes.

At Ranks 1 through 3, you gain a standard recharge speed and damage increase, so you could stop upgrading at Rank 3 if you don't plan on making Overload an integral part of EDI attack arsenal.

However, during missions where you encounter geth or other synthetic opponents, EDI can still prove to be very useful.

TIP

Remember, most tough enemies are shielded, preventing many Biotic powers from affecting them.

Pairing EDI with a Biotic squad member means she can Overload the enemies, rendering them vulnerable to the Biotic's incapacitating powers in a fast one-two punch.

Rank 4 Analysis

If you do make Overload a more integral part of EDI's attack arsenal, then consider upgrading Rank 4a. This will increase the amount of targets she can affect by one.

So instead of overloading only one enemy at a time, she can stun multiple enemies with each Overload blast. Rank 4b is a standard damage increase. Select this if you want her to focus more dealing damage to individual enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you gain the option to stun organic foes as well as synthetics.

The Neural Shock ability will expand EDI's role across a number of missions since her Overload power will no longer be effective against synthetic targets alone.

Rank 5b increases Overload's recharge speed, allowing her to use the skill more frequently in battle.

The trade-off between Ranks 5a and 5b are simple; if you want to use EDI against more varied types of enemies, select 5a. If you want to use her more frequently in battle to stun enemies en masse, select Rank 5b.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Rank 4a, Rank 6a will increase how many targets EDI can reach with an Overload blast by one and will increase the damage it inflicts by 15%.

The choice is simple; if you selected Rank 4a, make the same selection here and she will be able to stun small groups of enemies with one Overload blast.

Not only will she incapacitate more enemies at once, but you'll expend less power to do it. At Rank 6b, you can increase the damage dealt to barriers and shields, making EDI extremely effective against all shielded foes.

DEFENSE MATRIX (UNIQUE)

Reinforce armor with protective Foucault currents. Purge the currents to restore shields. Slow power use.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 20 sec.; Damage Reduction: 15%; Shields Restored: 50%

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Shield Bonus: Increase shield restoration by 20% when purging armor

Rank 4a—Durability: Increase damage protection by 5%

Rank 4b—Shield Bonus: Increase shield restoration by 30% when purging armor

Rank 5a—Shield Recharge: Increase shield recharge rate by 15%

Rank 5b—Power Synergy: Increase tech power damage by 25% while Defense Matrix is active

Rank 6a—Power Recharge: Reduce power speed penalty by 30%

Rank 6b—Durability: Increase damage protection by 10%

Ranks 1 to 3 Analysis

Just as its name implies, this power grants EDI an increase in defensive capabilities. When active, Defense Matrix increases the recharge speed, damage reduction, and shield restoration for EDI's armor.

At Rank 3, the recharge speed drops to 16 seconds while shield restoration increases to 70 percent. This power is especially useful because it can increase the amount of damage EDI can sustain during battle and allow her to use other powers as well.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can choose to either increase your Shield Bonus to 100 percent (4b) or increase the durability of her shields to reduce damage (4a).

While both sound like they do the same thing, Rank 4a is used to lower the amount of damage EDI incurs across the board.

Rank 4b allows EDI to restore her shields to 100 percent as soon as her armor is purged, making her nearly indestructible on the battlefield...as long as she can get behind cover.

Rank 5 Analysis

By selecting Rank 5a, you can increase the recharge rate of EDI's shields. The extra 15 percent may not sound like much, but in a heated firefight, few things are more important than the ability to regenerate your shields before the opponent.

Rank 5b, the Power Synergy upgrade, increases the damage of EDI's other tech powers, like Overload, by 25 percent when Defense Matrix is active.

Select this upgrade option if you want EDI to become a fierce tech power specialist.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final upgrade for EDI's Defense Matrix gives you the choice to either increase how quickly your powers recharge (6a) or lower the amount of damage you can take (6b).

If you chose Rank 4a, then select Rank 6b here to maximize EDI's toughness.

Otherwise, you can never go wrong by selecting Rank 6a. If EDI is going to use a lot of powers and lend a hand with power combinations, then select Rank 6a.

DECOY

Distract opponents with this decoy.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 16 sec.; Duration: 15; Decoy Shields: 1,000

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Duration: Increase duration by 30%

Rank 4a—Duration: Increase duration by 40%

Rank 4b—Durability: Increase shields by 40%

Rank 5a—Shock: Shock enemies within a 2.5-meter radius of the decoy

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 35%

Rank 6a—Exploding Decoy: Decoy explodes on destruction, causing 300 damage across 4 meters

Rank 6b—Shields and Duration: Increase shields and duration by 50%

Ranks 1 to 3 Analysis

Decoy is EDI's valuable unique power. When upgraded to Rank 3, you gain another member on the battlefield.

The decoy won't be able to fight back or stun enemies, but with nearly 20 seconds of life and 1,000 points of shields, EDI's decoy can do exactly what you need it to: draw away enemy fire and flush enemies out of cover.

Even if you don't plan on using EDI often, invest the six points required for these first three ranks. You'll be glad you did.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you have a very tough decision to make. You can either grant the decoy an extra six seconds of life or 400 points of shield protection.

Both can result in a very effective decoy, but your ultimate decision should be based on what role you want EDI and her decoy to take in missions.

If you frequently use a squad whose members have low health and shields and no tank, then select Rank 4b.

The higher shield rating will allow the decoy to take more damage up front and last long enough to occasionally take the brunt of attacks.

If you want a simple decoy that can distract multiple enemies for a prolonged amount of time, select Rank 4a.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5a, you can add the decoy's first offensive ability—Shock. While deployed, the decoy will not only absorb damage and distract enemies, but also shock enemies within a 2.5-meter radius.

This may not inflict a lot of damage, but if the enemies nearby are stunned, then they can't attack the decoy or your squad; therefore, the decoy will last a bit longer, and your squad can get the jump on stunned foes.

Rank 5b decreases the recharge speed for the Decoy ability to 10 seconds. That means that you can deploy it every 10 seconds and confuse enemies at nearly every turn.

Rank 6 Analysis

At Decoy's final Rank upgrade, you must choose whether to add a second offensive ability (6a), an explosion, or increase its shields and duration on the battlefield (6b).

Offensive-minded commanders should select Rank 6a. After all, the explosion can inflict 300 points of damage on all nearby foes within four meters!

Commanders who rely a bit more on special tactical maneuvers like flanking and leapfrogging will appreciate having the decoy last a bit longer during battle.

After all, if you chose Rank 4a, then Rank 6b will increase duration to 33 seconds. If you selected Rank 4b, then Rank 6b will increase the decoy's shields to 1,900 points.

UNSHACKLED AI

Boost power damage, shields and barriers, and health.

Rank 1—Health and Shield Bonus: 10%; Power Damage Bonus: 20%

Rank 2—Shields and Damage: Increase health and shield bonuses by 10%. Increase power damage bonus by 20%

Rank 3—Shields and Damage: Increase health and shield bonuses by 10%; increase power damage bonus by 20%

Rank 4a—Power Damage: Increase power damage by 20%

Rank 4b—Health and Shields: Increase health and shields bonuses by 20%

Rank 5a—Weapon Damage: Increase weapon damage by 20%

Rank 5b—Tech Damage: Increase tech power damage by 30%

Rank 6a—Squad Bonus: Increase squadmate tech power damage and duration by 10%

Rank 6b—Shield Recharge: Decrease shield recharge delay by 20%

Ranks 1 to 3 Analysis

Unshackled AI is great tech passive power capable of making EDI tougher defensively and offensively.

At Ranks 1 through 3, EDI will have a health and shield increase of 30 percent and a power damage bonus of 60 percent, making her tougher to damage and more dangerous when using powers.

Rank 4 Analysis

Increase EDI's power damage even more by selecting Rank 4a. This will bump her power damage bonus to 80 percent and make powers like Incinerate or Overload all the more effective.

If you prefer a more defensive approach, select Rank 4b instead.

Doing so will increase her health and shield bonus to 50 percent. The choice should hinge on whether you plan on using EDI as a tactical specialist or a tech power maven.

Rank 5 Analysis

Both Rank 5 upgrades increase EDI's damage potential. Rank 5a will augment your weapon damage by 20 percent. Rank 5b will increase all tech damage by 30 percent.

This should be a simple decision. If you use EDI primarily for her tech powers, then select Rank 5b. Otherwise, a 20 percent increase to weapon damage can be helpful in any mission.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final two upgrade options can either grant the squad a tech power damage and duration bonus (6a) or decrease EDI's shield recharge delay (6b).

Rank 6a, the squad bonus, is great for players who employ tech-heavy teams. Choose this upgrade option to bolster squads that frequently feature EDI, Tali, and Engineer Shepards. Otherwise, select Rank 6b.

After all, EDI can always benefit from increased shield recharging.

BUILD OPTIONS

TECH POWER SPECIALIST

- **Incinerate:** 4a, 5a, 6b
- **Overload:** 4b, 6b
- **Defense Matrix:** 5b, 6a
- **Unshackled AI:** 4a, 5b, 6a

Given her synthetic nature, it's no surprise that EDI might have a predisposition toward tech powers like Overload and Defense Matrix.

Better yet, her passive skill, Unshackled AI, can be upgraded toward augmenting tech powers as a whole. The final Rank upgrade even has an option to increase your squad's tech power damage and duration.

Use source powers like Overload or Incinerate to set up deadly explosions, while Defense Matrix supplements EDI's shields and augments tech power damage.

TACTICAL SPECIALIST

- **Incinerate:** 4a, 5a, 6b
- **Overload:** 4a, 5a, 6a
- **Defense Matrix:** 4a, 6b
- **Decoy:** 4a, 5a, 6a or 6b
- **Unshackled AI:** 4b, 6a

EDI can also use her unique Decoy power to facilitate a multitude of useful tactics on the battlefield. When deployed, EDI's Decoy can do anything from distract foes to stun them.

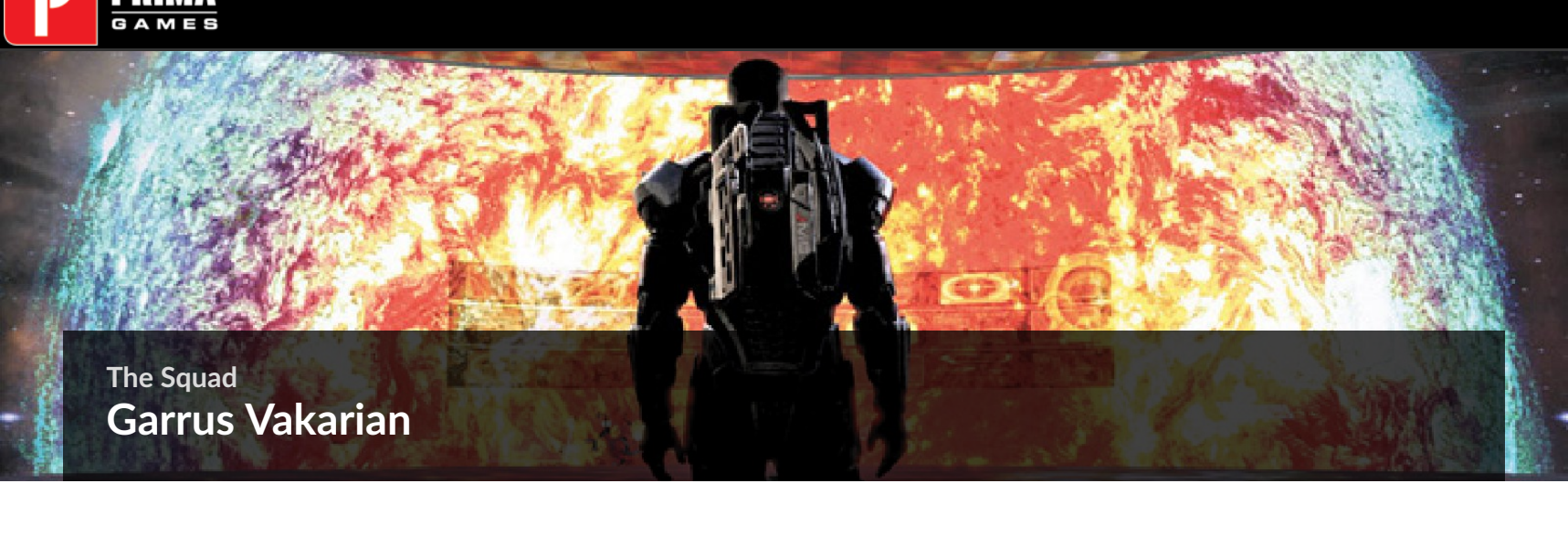
While the decoy is active, the entire squad can benefit from its presence. However, Decoy isn't the only useful tactical power.

Rely heavily on EDI's Overload power to stun multiple foes, and free other squad members to execute useful tactical maneuvers.

When upgraded properly, EDI can become a one-person flank or bait for flushing out enemies.

ROMANCE

EDI is not a romantic option for Commander Shepard. She can, however, engage Joker in a relationship with Shepard's helpful counsel.



The Squad

Garrus Vakarian

Garrus Vakarian is a noted turian sharpshooter and combat engineer.

He was born on Palaven and became a Citadel security officer like his father but left the force when superiors shut down his investigation into the rogue Spectre Saren Arterius.

Vakarian eventually discovered that Saren had been indoctrinated by the Reaper known as Sovereign.

In time, Vakarian found his way to the criminal haven of Omega and assumed the name Archangel. There, he and a small group of operatives worked to disrupt the settlement's powerful mercenary groups until Shepard recruited him.

The turian narrowly survived the second Normandy attack on the Collectors. More recently, Vakarian has become the head of a turian task force focused on preparing for the Reaper invasion.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

A returning character from *Mass Effect 1* and *Mass Effect 2* , Garrus is one of Shepard's most trusted comrades.

After the events of the first *Mass Effect* , Garrus and Shepard went their separate ways. After reuniting in *Mass Effect 2* and defeating the Collectors together, the pair once again parted company.

Now, Garrus returns to help Shepard in the fight. Garrus is a potential romance if female Shepard romanced Garrus in *Mass Effect 2* .

If you import a save from a game where Garrus is not present, then Garrus will not appear during *Mass Effect 3* .

There is no replacement character to join Shepard's squad; Shepard will simply have fewer options from which to choose.

TACTICAL ROLE

Since Concussive Shot can serve as a detonator power, consider upgrading it to deal maximum damage. Similarly, Overload can serve as both a source and detonator power, so upgrading it can benefit nearly any squad Garrus is in.

Despite these power benefits, Garrus's true strength is in weapon damage.

After all, Garrus is a weapon damage specialist. His ability to wield either type of rifle makes him a great mid- to long-range soldier, but skills like Proximity Mine, Concussive Shot, and Overload are also great at disrupting enemy movements.

If you favor direct combat, steer Garrus toward weapon-damage upgrades.

Given his affinity to sniper rifles, however, Garrus can also make a great tactical sharpshooter. Order Garrus to elevated positions, or have him hang back when approaching long, wide-open areas.

From the safety of cover, Garrus will be able to covertly snipe enemies from afar, lightening the load for the rest of your squad.

POWERS

CONCUSSIVE SHOT

Flatten your enemy with a precise blast at short or long range. Effective against barriers.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 10 sec.; Damage: 100; Force: 300 Newtons

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%.

Rank 3—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Force and Damage: Increase force and damage by 30%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 1.5 meters

Rank 5a—Shatter: Increase force and damage to frozen targets by 100%

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 35%

Rank 6a—Amplification: Power Concussive Shot with the properties of the active ammo power, enabling it to burn, freeze, disrupt, warp, or pierce armor

Rank 6b—Shredder: Increase damage to organics by 100% over 10 seconds; increase force by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Concussive Shot is a lot more than just another burst from your weapon of choice. With a single blast of Concussive Shot, you can disrupt an enemy's progress, knock them down, or deplete their protective barrier.

At Rank 3, Concussive Shot can dish out 100 points of damage and 300 Newtons of force. When paired with a source power like Incinerate, Concussive Shot is the perfect detonator.

Rank 4 Analysis

Like most other powers with explosive or concussive abilities, the first upgrade choice given is to increase either the power's effects, in this case force and damage (Rank 4a), or increase its radius (Rank 4b).

Select your upgrade based on Garrus's eventual build. If you want to shape Garrus into a formidable weapon damage dealer, select Rank 4a.

This will inflict more damage per Concussive Shot. By selecting Rank 4b, Garrus can knock more enemies down per shot but inflict less damage.

This option is helpful in squads that favor disrupting enemies before killing them.

Rank 5 Analysis

If you plan on grouping Garrus with Cryo-friendly squadmates, select Rank 5a. Shatter will affect only those foes that have been frozen or chilled using Cryo Blast or Cryo Ammo.

If you don't favor Cryo users, then select Rank 5b.

The increased recharge speed for Concussive Shot will ensure you're able to knock down enemies all over the battlefield with less time spent waiting for your power to ready.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Rank 5a, Rank 6a takes other powers into account in order to function. At Rank 6a, Amplification will power Concussive Shot with ammo powers like Cryo or Warp Ammo.

Since Garrus also has Armor-Piercing Ammo, Rank 6a will automatically imbue Concussive Shot with armor-piercing abilities when Armor-Piercing Ammo is active.

However, when paired with squadmates like James who are capable of giving squadmates Incendiary Ammo, this upgrade will also imbue those ammo effects on each Concussive Shot.

If you vary your squad composition often, then you may not be paired with squadmates like James often enough to benefit from Rank 6a.

In that case, select Rank 6b, Shredder. This upgrade adds a damage-over-time effect to every shot and increases the force of each Concussive Shot, allowing you to knock down tougher enemies.

OVERLOAD

Overload electronics with this power surge, stunning your enemy. Effective against shields, barriers, and synthetics. Not as effective against organics.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 16 sec.; Damage: 220

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Chain Overload: Hit 1 additional target within 8 meters with 60% less damage

Rank 4b—Damage: Increase damage by 30%

Rank 5a—Neural Shock: Incapacitate weaker organic enemies for a short duration

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 6a—Chain Overload: Increase damage by 15%. Hit 1 additional target within 8 meters with 60% less damage

Rank 6b—Shield Damage: Increase damage to barriers and shields by an additional 100%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

By far one of the most useful powers against synthetics, Overload can temporarily fry electrical equipment like turrets and can singe synthetic foes.

At Ranks 1 through 3, you gain a standard recharge speed and damage increase, so you could stop upgrading at Rank 3 if you don't plan on making Overload an integral part of you attack arsenal.

However, during missions where you encounter geth or other synthetic opponents, Overload can still prove to be very useful.

Rank 4 Analysis

If you do make Overload a more integral part of Garrus's arsenal, then consider upgrading Rank 4a. This will increase the amount of targets he can affect by one blast of Overload.

So instead of overloading only one enemy at a time, Garrus can stun multiple enemies with each Overload blast. Rank 4b is a standard damage increase.

Select this if you want to focus more dealing damage to individual enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5 you gain the option to stun organic foes as well as synthetics.

The Neural Shock ability will expand Garrus's role across a number of missions since his Overload power will no longer be effective against synthetic targets alone.

Rank 5b increases Overload's recharge speed, allowing Garrus to use the skill more frequently in battle.

The trade-off between Ranks 5a and 5b are simple; if you want to use Overload against more varied types of enemies, select 5a.

If you want to use it more frequently in battle to stun enemies en masse, select Rank 5b.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Rank 4a, Rank 6a will increase how many targets you can reach with an Overload blast by one target and increase the damage it inflicts by 15 percent.

The choice is simple; if you selected Rank 4a, make the same selection here and he will be able to stun small groups of enemies with one Overload blast.

Not only will he incapacitate more enemies at once, but you'll expend less power to do it. At Rank 6b, you can increase the damage dealt to barriers and shields, making Garrus extremely effective against all shielded foes.

ARMOR-PIERCING AMMO (UNIQUE)

Bring down heavy-armor units. Shoot through light cover to hit enemies. More weapon damage. More damage to armor.

Rank 1—Health Damage Bonus: +10%; Armor Damage Bonus: +10%; Armor Effectiveness: −50%; Penetration: 0.5 meters

Rank 2—Pierce: Increase ammo's cover penetration by 40%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase health and armor damage bonuses by 4%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase health and armor damage by 6%

Rank 4b—Squad Bonus: Squadmates gain your ammo power at 50% effectiveness

Rank 5a—Ammo Capacity: Increase ammo capacity by 30%

Rank 5b—Headshot: Increase headshot damage by 25%

Rank 6a—Damage: Increase health and armor damage by 10%

Rank 6b—Pierce: Increase ammo's cover-penetration by 50%. Decrease the effectiveness of armored targets by 25%

RANKS 1 THROUGH 3 ANALYSIS

Armor-Piercing Ammo is a must for soldiers like Garrus who excel in dealing weapon damage. With skills like Overload in his arsenal, he can affect synthetic targets more efficiently.

With Armor-Piercing Ammo equipped, he can also more efficiently affect armored organic targets like Cerberus troopers as well.

Keep this active at all times since, like all other Ammo powers, you don't incur any power penalties when you activate it.

RANK 4 ANALYSIS

At Rank 4, Armor-Piercing Ammo can either increase damage to health and armor (4a), or you can gain the ability to automatically grant it to all squadmates when active (4b).

The choice really breaks down to whether you want to inflict as much damage as you can or whether Garrus will hang back as part of the squad.

If you're playing Shepard as a class that does not have an Ammo power (Cryo Ammo, Warp Ammo, or Incendiary Ammo), you can select Rank 4b and gain the use of Garrus's Armor-Piercing Ammo when he's on a mission with you.

Otherwise, select Rank 4a and increase his ability to inflict as much damage as possible. Rank 4a is also best suited for players who want Garrus to focus more on sniping and sharpshooting.

RANK 5 ANALYSIS

Since Garrus can carry only an assault or sniper rifle, then make your selection for the Rank 5 upgrade based on what will be his primary weapon.

Rank 5a increases his ammo count, which is great for weapons that expend a lot of ammunition, like assault rifles.

Rank 5b increases the amount of damage Garrus inflicts with a headshot.

While, technically, Rank 5a can benefit Garrus builds that favor sniper rifles (due to the low ammunition count of most sniper rifles) and Rank 5b can also benefit Garrus builds that favor assault rifles (since headshots are great no matter what weapon you employ), both Rank 5 options are a win-win situation.

RANK 6 ANALYSIS

Garrus's Rank 6 choices are both geared to increase his damage output. If you chose the damage upgrade for Rank 4, then select Rank 6a.

It will also increase health and armor damage across the board by 10 percent. Rank 6b increases your ammunition's ability to pierce armor even more effectively.

It will also increase how far your armor can penetrate cover, allowing Garrus to shoot through a meter of cover.

PROXIMITY MINE (UNIQUE)

Fire this sticky mine into traffic. It will detonate when an enemy steps within range.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 24 sec.; Damage: 400; Radius: 3 meters

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 40%

Rank 5a—Damage Taken: Increase damage dealt to targets from all sources by 25% for 8 seconds

Rank 5b—Slow: Slow target's movement speed by 30% for 8 seconds

Rank 6a—Damage: Increase damage by 50%

Rank 6b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 40%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Few other skills are as well suited to Garrus's high weapon damage output than Proximity Mine. The mine is an explosive projectile.

Rather than explode on contact, however, the Proximity Mine will sit unbothered until a rival comes within striking distance and then explode.

This power is useful in creating bottlenecks and traps and setting down explosive perimeters around your squad.

At Rank 3, Garrus's proximity mines can inflict 480 points of damage within a three-meter radius, which can give you or your squad a decent three-meter cushion before enemies get within striking distance.

Rank 4 Analysis

Like most grenade powers, Rank 4 grants you the choice to either increase damage (Rank 4a) or increase the damage radius (Rank 4b).

The choice should be made depending on whether you want to use his proximity mines primarily as damage-dealers or as tactical booby traps for enemies.

The wider the radius, the more enemies that can be affected by their explosion. Keep this in mind when entering narrow areas like catwalks or tight hallways.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5 gives you the choice to either add an extra damage-over-time effect (increasing damage from all sources for eight seconds on the target it hits) or to slow a target's movement.

Once again, the choice here is the same as Rank 4. If you want to inflict the most damage possible, select Rank 5a.

Enemies hit by a Proximity Mine's explosion will take more damage from powers and weapons after the explosion.

If you want to use the Proximity Mines as crowd-controlling booby traps, select Rank 5b. The extra-slow effects will allow your team to execute tactical maneuvers or overwhelm them with attacks.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final rank upgrade will either increase the damage to a potential maximum of 800 per explosion (Rank 6a) or increase the recharge speed (Rank 6b), allowing you to use mines more often.

The more proximity mines you can leave on the battlefield, the more intricate a booby trap you can set.

TURIAN REBEL (UNIQUE)

Boost weapon damage, health, and powers.

Rank 1—Health and Shield Bonus: 10%; Weapon Damage Bonus: 20%

Rank 2—Damage and Durability: Increase health and shield bonuses by 10%; increase weapon damage bonuses by 20%

Rank 3—Damage and Durability: Increase health and shield bonuses by 10%; increase weapon damage bonuses by 20%

Rank 4a—Weapon Damage: Increase weapon damage by 40%

Rank 4b—Durability: Increase health and shields bonuses by 20%

Rank 5a—Power Damage: Increase power damage by 20%

Rank 5b—Assault Rifles: Increase assault rifle damage by 50%

Rank 6a—Squad Bonus: Increase power damage of squadmates by 10%

Rank 6b—Sniper Rifles: Increase sniper rifle damage by 60%/p>

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

If you're going to use Garrus as a heavy-weapon damage dealer, then his passive power, Turian Rebel, is an absolute necessity. At Rank 3, he'll gain a generous 60 percent weapon damage bonus, making all of his rifle attacks even more effective.

Where a sniper shot to the torso would severely wound a Cerberus trooper, at Rank 3 of Turian Rebel, that same shot may kill off the trooper completely.

Even if you don't favor spending upgrade points on passive powers, invest the six points in Turian Rebel's first three ranks. It's more than worth it.

Rank 4 Analysis

Players who want to increase Garrus's weapon damage even more should invest four more points in Rank 4a, Weapon Damage.

This will increase weapon damage bonus to 100 percent, making all of Garrus's weapon attacks doubly efficient. To make Garrus a tougher combatant, invest those points in Rank 4b, Durability.

This will increase health and shield bonuses to 50 percent.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you must choose whether Garrus will favor assault rifles or other destructive powers like Proximity Mine.

He's a skilled sharpshooter and efficient weapon specialist with either weapons or power-heavy combat, so there is no real downside to making him favor one over the other.

However, do take into account the role you'd like him to play across the majority of your missions.

If you want Garrus to be a weapon-damage specialist, then select Rank 5b. You'll gain a boost to assault rifle use.

If you select Rank 5a, then Garrus's Proximity Mines, Concussive Shot, and Overload will gain a substantial boost in damage output.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Rank 5, Rank 6 will also give you the option to increase weapon damage, in this case sniper rifle damage. If you've selected Rank 5b, then select Rank 6b as well.

This will result in higher weapon damage regardless of which rifle Garrus carries. The alternative is to grant the squad a power damage increase of 10 percent (Rank 6a).

Since this does not directly affect Garrus, select this upgrade only if your squad is built to complement each other through power sharing.

For example, if you have squadmates who can grant other teammates the ability to use their specific ammo power (like Kaidan's Incendiary Ammo).

BUILD OPTIONS

WEAPON DAMAGE SPECIALIST

- **Concussive Shot:** 4a, 5a, 6b
- **Overload:** 4b
- **Armor-Piercing Ammo:** 4a, 5a, 6a
- **Proximity Mines:** 4a, 5a, 6a
- **Turian Rebel:** 4a, 5b, 6a

Garrus can be a deadly weapons specialist. When upgraded properly, everything from his rifle proficiency to his Proximity Mine power can dish out an impressive amount of damage.

Two of his powers, Concussive Shot and Overload, can deal damage, but they're better used for disrupting enemies than destroying them.

So also consider upgrading both types of rifles (sniper and assault) to increase Garrus's weapon damage.

Once upgraded, other powers like Armor-Piercing Ammo and Turian Rebel can help increase weapon damage and ammo efficiency.

Proximity Mines are also a valuable part of Garrus's arsenal. Use them to blow up small groups and otherwise obliterate large rivals.

TACTICAL SHARPSHOOTER

- **Concussive Shot:** 4a, 5a, 6b
- **Overload:** 4a, 5a or 5b
- **Armor-Piercing Ammo:** 4a, 5b, 6b
- **Proximity Mines:** 4b, 5b, 6b
- **Turian Rebel:** 4a, 5a, 6a

A tactical sharpshooter is not much different than a weapon damage specialist. The only difference is that a tactical sharpshooter favors a sniper rifle as his primary weapon and doesn't frequently engage in close-range combat.

A tactical sharpshooter favors enemy disruption, traps, tactical maneuvers, and long-range sniping rather than direct combat.

Use Garrus to hang back and cover your tactical approach. He can snipe enemies from afar, hold a flanking enemy at bay, or even set up Proximity Mines as complex booby traps.

With heavy use of Overload and Concussive Shot, Garrus can also concentrate on disrupting enemies before picking them off with his sniper rifle.

ROMANCE

If female Shepard romanced Garrus in *Mass Effect 2* , she has the option to continue the relationship.

KEY CONVERSATIONS

After joining the squad, Garrus will speak with Shepard at his post at the Normandy's main gun battery. After exchanging pleasantries, he will bring up his relationship with Shepard.

Shepard can either end it in a friendly fashion or indicate that she'd like to keep it going. This doesn't commit Shepard to the relationship; it just allows the relationship to keep going.

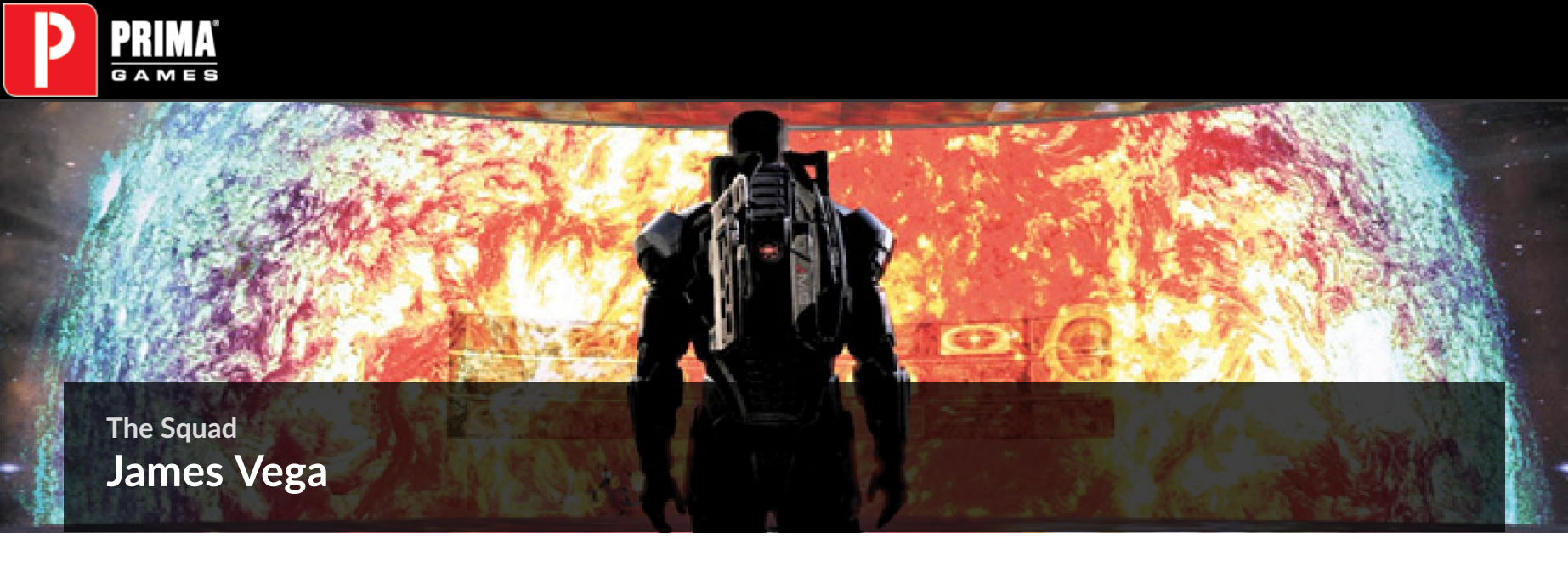
Shepard can also talk with Garrus after finishing the Genophage missions on Tuchanka. Garrus is in the cockpit, trading barbs with Joker, and Shepard can share a moment of camaraderie and reflect on how she chose to resolve the final Genophage mission.

KEY MOMENT

Once Shepard has spoken with Garrus enough times, Garrus will offer to meet Shepard on the Citadel. Shepard and Garrus climb to one of the highest parts of the Presidium, and Garrus will declare his love and ask Shepard to make a commitment.

While not restricted to the romance, Shepard can have interesting late-game conversations with Garrus about the responsibilities and pressures of being in command during a war.

If Shepard chose to sabotage the Genophage cure, Garrus is the one person Shepard can come clean with.



The Squad

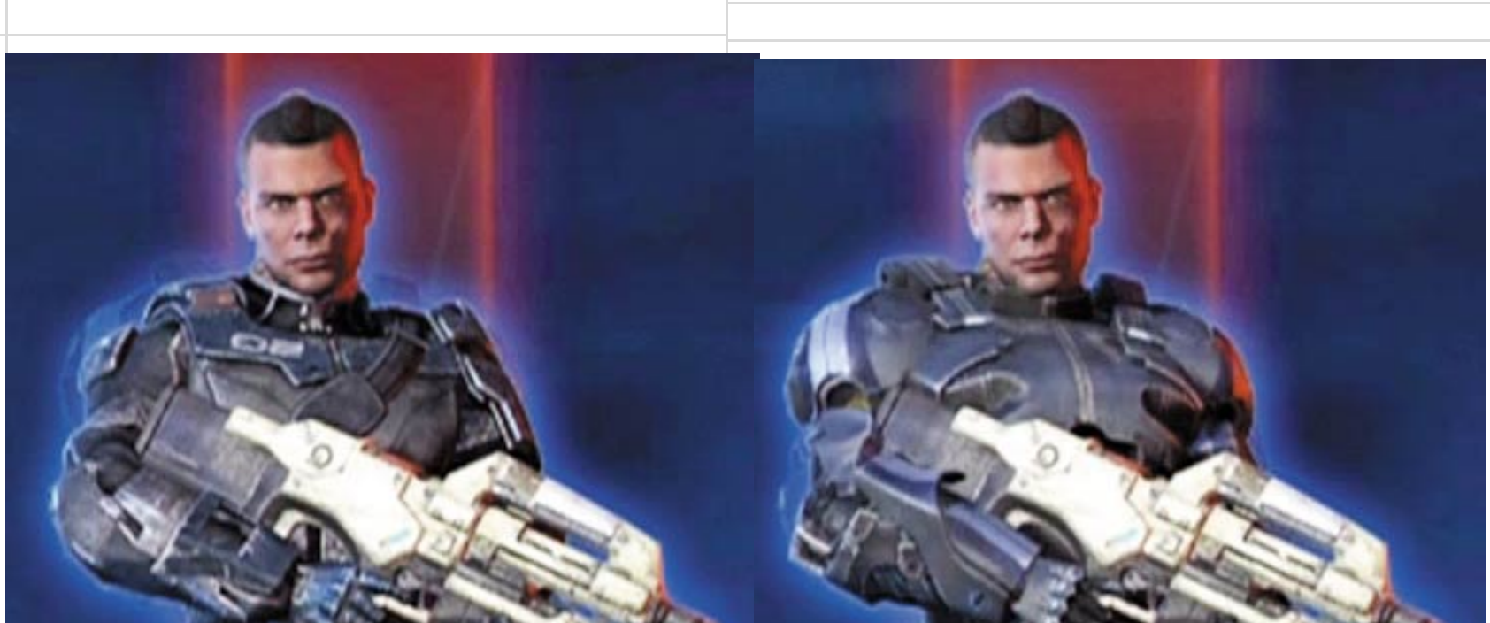
James Vega

Young, brash, and dangerous, James is one of the best soldiers in the Alliance, but he's also on a fast track to burning out.

He works hard, plays hard, and drinks hard. Some see him as reckless, and his superiors see him as fearless, but those who know him best know there's a self-destructive side to his heroics.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

This is James Vega's first appearance in the *Mass Effect* franchise.



TACTICAL ROLE

James Vega's size and bulk do not lie. At first glance, it is easy to see that he's built for taking and dishing out damage.

Nearly all of James's powers are geared for damage output, except two of his unique powers—Fortification and Arms Master (his passive power); these are best suited for tanking.

When properly upgraded, Fortification and Arms Master allow James to take more damage, making him a perfect spearhead for tactical maneuvers.

Send him in first when advancing on enemy troops or send him off alone to flank the enemy's vulnerable side.

If you want to concentrate on damage output but not utilize James as a tank, pour the majority of his upgrade points into damage-dealing powers like Carnage, Frag Grenade, and Incendiary Ammo.

The combination of Incendiary Ammo and Frag Grenades (when upgraded to Rank 5b) can increase the amount of damage inflicted on enemies with the least amount of ammunition expended.

Frag Grenade's added bleed effect and Incendiary Ammo's ability to also inflict damage over time can stack up, causing vulnerable organic targets to suffer increased damage beyond the initial impact.

POWERS

FRAG GRENADE

Lob this grenade at your enemy, and the shrapnel will take care of the rest. Effective against armor.

Rank 1—Damage: 450; Impact Radius: 5 meters

Rank 2—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 1

Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 30%

Rank 5a—Max Grenades: Increase grenade capacity by 2

Rank 5b—Bleed Damage: Increase damage to organics by 40% over 10 seconds

Rank 6a—Armor-piercing: Increases damage to armor by 50%

Rank 6b—Shield Overload: Increase damage to shields by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Frag Grenades are useful in nearly all combat situations. At Ranks 1 through 3, a well-aimed grenade can serve as a great medium- to long-range weapon. Hurl it ahead of you and inflict damage on unsuspecting foes.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4 you can choose to either increase the damage output or its damage radius. If you want to concentrate on dishing out maximum damage, choose Rank 4a.

However, Rank 4b will increase the impact radius of your grenade, allowing you to damage more enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5 allows you to either increase the amount of grenades you can carry or add a bleed effect to all organic targets. For players who want to be offensive powerhouses, consider carrying more grenades.

Rank option 5a will ensure that you always have plenty of grenades for nearly all combat scenarios. James is essentially a Soldier, so the more ammunition and explosives he has, the better.

Rank option 5b, however, can also help maximize damage on organic (nonsynthetic) targets.

The bleed effect left by grenades can add a significant amount of damage to enemies, especially if you've chosen Rank 4b (increase in impact radius).

The drawback to Rank 5b is that it won't affect synthetic targets such as the geth or turrets.

Rank 6 Analysis

At maximum rank, players can either increase armor-piercing abilities or add an EMP pulse to the explosion to affect shields.

Both options help further weaken protected enemies, but once again, you must choose whether you'll be weakening organic (armored) or synthetic (shielded) enemies.

If you chose Rank 5b (adding a bleed effect), then select Rank 6a to complement your power selection.

INCENDIARY AMMO

Shoot and your enemy will burst into flames. Increases weapon damage, eats through armor, and can make an enemy panic.

Rank 1—Health damage: +10%; Armor damage: +10%

Rank 2—Panic: Improve the odds of panicking a target by 15%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase health and armor damage bonuses by 4%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase health and armor damage bonuses by 6%

Rank 4b—Squad Bonus: Squadmates gain Incendiary Ammo at 50% effectiveness

Rank 5a—Ammo Capacity: Increase ammo capacity by 30%

Rank 5b—Headshots: Increase headshot damage by 25%

Rank 6a—Damage: Increase health and armor damage bonuses by 10%

Rank 6b—Explosive Burst: Ignite enemies with an intermittent explosion that covers 2.5 meters for 100 damage

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Incendiary Ammo is a great power for a damage-dealer like James because it makes all weapon fire even more lethal.

With Incendiary Ammo (or any Ammo power), it's best to activate it before every mission and make sure you keep it active at all times.

When active, it extends damage over time and sets enemies ablaze.

It also functions as a "source" power that can be detonated using other powers like Concussive Shot, Sticky or Frag Grenades, or even Carnage.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, Incendiary Ammo can either increase damage to health and armor (4a), or you can gain the ability to automatically grant it to all squadmates when active (4b).

The choice really breaks down to whether you want James to tank and dish out as much damage as you can or want him to hang back as part of the squad.

If you're playing as a class that does not have an Ammo power (Cryo Ammo, Warp Ammo, or Incendiary Ammo), you can select Rank 4b and gain the use of James's Incendiary Ammo when he's on a mission with you.

Otherwise, select Rank 4a and increase his ability to inflict as much damage as possible.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, James can select to either carry 30 percent more ammunition or to increase headshot damage by 25 percent.

To make the best use of this selection, take into account what types of weapons James will be equipped with.

James cannot carry a sniper rifle, so don't select Rank 4b in hopes of making him a deadly sniper-class squadmate.

Instead, select it if you frequently task James with attacking from a distance with an assault rifle.

Again, if you prefer James to serve as the team's tank, equip him with a shotgun and select Rank 4a.

He'll benefit from the increased ammunition count when engaging enemies in close combat—the shotgun's best range.

Rank 6 Analysis

Both options in Rank 6 increase Incendiary Ammo's damage output. However, Rank 6a is for a health and armor damage increase across the board.

This makes all shots with Incendiary Ammo all the more powerful since it's a good general increase to overall damage. Rank 6b adds an entirely new effect to shots taken using Incendiary Ammo.

Instead of simply dealing more damage to health and armor, it ignites enemies and explodes, causing more damage in a wider radius and reaching more enemies nearby.

Your Rank 6 option should depend on whether you want James to take down enemies one at a time, or if you want to use him like a tenderizer, softening up groups of enemies for the rest of your squad to finish off.

TIP

By selecting Ranks 4b, 5a, and 6b, you can utilize James like a one-man assault line.

The combination of increased ammo capacity and increased damage radius will allow James to soften up small groups of enemies before the rest of the squad approaches.

Meanwhile, James's Rank 4b (granting the squad Incendiary Ammo) will increase the rest of the squad's ability to finish enemies off quickly.

FORTIFICATION (UNIQUE)

Reinforce armor using protective Foucault currents. Purge the current and send its charge to your gauntlets for increased melee damage. Slow power use.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 10 sec.; Damage Reduction: 15%; Melee Damage Bonus: 50%

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed after detonation by 25% when armor is purged

Rank 3—Melee Damage: Increase melee damage bonus by 20% when armor is purged

Rank 4a—Durability: Increase damage protection by 5%

Rank 4b—Melee Damage: Increase melee damage bonus by 30% when armor is purged

Rank 5a—Recharge Speed: Increase shield recharge rate by 15%

Rank 5b—Power Synergy: Increase power damage and force by 20% while Fortification is active

Rank 6a—Power Recharge: Reduce power speed penalty by 30%

Rank 6b—Durability: Increase damage protection by 10%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

This power's true strength is in close-quarters combat. When active, James will take less damage and will gain melee damage output.

When equipped with a shotgun, this power can be James's bread and butter. Activate it before rushing into battle and James can inflict a great deal of damage on enemies using melee attacks alone.

Couple it with the ultradestructive power of a shotgun, and you'll frequently find that James has the situation handled before you can even reach the target.

Rank 4 Analysis

Rank 4 options depend on whether you want James to function more like a damage-absorbing tank or a damage-dealing tank. If your squad is built to rush and overwhelm enemies, then select Rank 4b.

This will increase James's ability to deal damage in melee combat and end hostile encounters quicker.

However, if you want James to be an all-purpose tank capable of taking on groups of enemies alone while the rest of the squad handles other foes, or if you want him to be a one-man flank or a one-man front line, then select Rank 4a.

This will allow him to take more damage while you execute your tactical maneuvers.

Rank 5 Analysis

This rank option is about offense vs. defense. Keep your Rank 4 selection in mind when making a choice here. If you want James to be a more defensive soldier, select Rank 5a.

This will recharge his shield quicker and keep him in the fight longer. To go with an offensive powerhouse, select Rank 5b.

It will increase the damage dealt by powers, as opposed to weapons fire, so using Carnage while Fortification is active will increase Carnage's damage and force by 20 percent.

Rank 6 Analysis

Rank 6a reduces that power speed penalty by 30 percent. This will let James unleash destructive power blasts while not sacrificing any speed in the power department.

Selecting Rank 6b will reduce the amount of damage James takes overall. If you've selected 4a and 5a, select Rank 6b to make James as tough and durable as possible.

Carnage (Unique)

Rip a target into shreds with this vicious blast. Major collateral damage to enemies nearby. Effective against armor.

Rank 1—Recharge speed: 20 sec.; Damage: 315; Radius: 1.5 meters

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Radius: Increase impact radius by 50%

Rank 4b—Damage: Increase damage by 30%

Rank 5a—Incapacitate: Incapacitate enemies by knocking them down

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 35%

Rank 6a—Armor Damage: Increase damage to armored units by 65%

Rank 6b—Damage: Increase damage by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

By far one of James's best powers, Carnage is perfect for players who want James to be a damage-dealing machine.

It's not the most graceful or elegant of the powers, and it may not even be the most unique, but it is one of the most effective powers across the board.

This singular blast can shred through many foes with ease even if they're equipped with armor.

Rank 4 Analysis

At this rank, you must choose whether to use Carnage to shred single enemies, one at a time, or whether to use it to soften enemies in groups.

If you've chosen Frag Grenades Rank 4b and Incendiary Ammo Rank 6b, then you'd do well to also select Rank 4a of Carnage.

This increases the damage radius of all your powers and maximizes the amount of damage that James can do to small groups. However, if you want James to single-handedly take on Brutes and Banshees, then select Rank 4b.

This will help increase the damage he can do to a single enemy and ease the pressure for the rest of the group when encountering these tougher foes.

Rank 5 Analysis

If an enemy is on the ground, it can't fight back. In many cases, it's often better to knock enemies down or away than it is to inflict damage.

Fast foes like Phantoms can take bullets and quickly recover on their way to their next attack.

When facing these foes, it's better for James to knock them down and allow the rest of the squad to take them out.

If James is going to function like the first line of offense on a well-rounded team, select Rank 5a. He'll knock them down, and the rest of the team will knock them out.

For squads that require James to use multiple powers and to attack quickly rather than heavily, select Rank 5b.

This will increase the recharge speed of James's powers and allow him to use powers more frequently.

Rank 6 Analysis

Both of the final Carnage ranks increase damage. Rank 6a increases damage to armored foes like Cerberus soldiers, and Rank 6b simply increases damage across all types of targets.

Rank 6b is the obvious choice since not every enemy you face is armored, but Rank 6b is especially useful against any enemy with armor, including Cannibals that have fed and certain Geth Troopers.

ARMS MASTER (UNIQUE)

Boost offensive and defensive abilities.

Rank 1—Health/Shields: +20%; Weapon damage: +10%

Rank 2—Damage and Durability: Increase health and shield bonuses by 20%; increase weapon damage bonuses by 10%

Rank 3—Damage and Durability: Increase health and shield bonuses by 20%; increase weapon damage bonuses by 10%

Rank 4a—Durability: Increase health and shield bonuses by 40%

Rank 4b—Weapon Damage: Increase weapon damage bonus by 20%

Rank 5a—Power Damage: Increase power damage by 20%

Rank 5b—Shield Recharge: Decrease shield-recharge delay by -20%

Rank 6a—Squad Bonus: Increase squadmate health and shields by 20%

Rank 6b—Fortification: Increase health and shield bonuses by 30%; increase melee damage by 100%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

The first three ranks of this passive skill raise James's health and shields and weapon damage bonuses to 60 and 30 percent, respectively.

You can stop here and use any future upgrade points on other powers if you'd like. After all, even with the first three ranks upgraded, James becomes a formidable opponent capable of tanking in most situations.

Rank 4 Analysis

If you do invest more points in James's passive powers, you can select to either take more damage or dish it out. The two choices in Rank 4 complement many of James's other power trees.

Rank 4a will allow you to take more damage, augmenting his tanking abilities. Conversely, Rank 4b will augment James's damage output, making him deadlier on the battlegrounds.

Make your selection here based on your Fortification choices. If you chose both Durability options in Fortification, select 4a here as well.

Rank 5 Analysis

This is another rank where you must choose between damage increases or the ability to stay in a fight longer.

Even though option 5b doesn't directly increase your shields or health, it will help keep James's shields charged longer by reducing the delay in shield-recharge time.

That means his shields will go into recharge mode faster and get him back into the battle quicker. Rank 5a is a simple increase in power damage, which is never a bad thing. Powers like Carnage and Incendiary Ammo will become even more deadly.

BUILD OPTIONS

TANK: DEFENSIVE

- **Fortification:** Ranks 4a, 5a, 6b
- **Incendiary Ammo:** Rank 5a
- **Arms Master:** Ranks 4a, 5b, 6b

There are different ways to tank with James. A defensive tank can hold off large enemies or engage small groups while the rest of the team either inflicts damage or accomplishes tasks and maneuvers.

A defensive tank won't inflict a lot of damage, but he will absorb it.

TANK: OFFENSIVE

- **Arms Master:** Ranks 4b, 5a
- **Fortification:** Ranks 4b, 5b
- **Frag Grenade:** Ranks 4a, 5b, 6a or 6b
- **Incendiary Ammo:** Ranks 4a, 5b, 6b
- **Carnage:** Ranks 4b, 6b

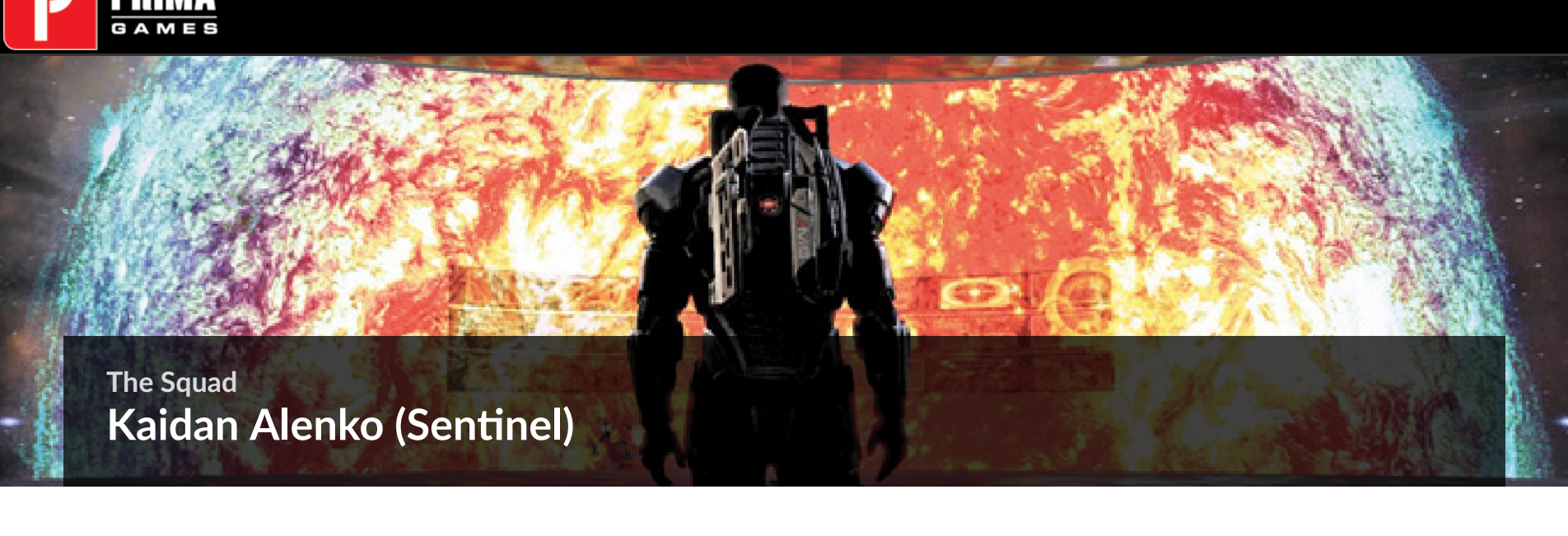
Where a defensive tank can fend off enemies for the rest of the squad, an offensive-minded tank can inflict a lot of damage at the cost of absorbing it.

An offensive tank won't be able to stand toe-to-toe for long against a Brute or a Banshee, but he shouldn't need to.

With this combination of powers, James can deplete an enemy's health nearly entirely or at least enough for the rest of the squad to finish them off.

ROMANCE

Even though you can interact and speak with James on plenty of occasions (to get to know all about him and his rich history), James Vega is not a romance option for either male or female Shepard.



The Squad

Kaidan Alenko (Sentinel)

Major Kaidan Alenko is a human Biotic and an officer in the Systems Alliance. He served as staff lieutenant under Commander Shepard on the SSV *Normandy* during the Battle of the Citadel and now heads the Special Operations Biotics Division at the Alliance Warfare Center.

An Alliance tribunal recently called on Alenko to testify about his experience with the Reapers.

Alenko suffers from severe headaches because of the early-model L2 Biotic implants that he was given as a child. The L2 implants have since been discontinued due to the risk of crippling neurological damage.

PREVIOUSLY IN MASS EFFECT

Kaidan is a returning character from *Mass Effect 1* and *Mass Effect 2* . Part of Shepard's crew in *ME1* , he's returning again to join Shepard's crew.

In *Mass Effect 2* , Kaidan was one of the crew members ejected to safety when the first Normandy was destroyed.

He assumed that Shepard died in that attack. When Kaidan found out that Shepard was not only alive but also was working for Cerberus, he was upset and suspicious.

Shepard must regain the trust of this old friend (and potential former lover).

NOTE

New players can recruit either Kaidan or Ashley to your crew based on your Crew Loss decision at the beginning of the game. You cannot recruit both.

TACTICAL ROLE

Kaidan is a versatile weapon with strengths in Biotic and Tech fields. While he's not equipped for dealing a lot of weapon damage like other squadmates, he does do a lot of power damage.

His combination of the powers Barrier, Reave, and Overload still make him a great asset to have in battle when facing strong enemies.

Rather than deal lots of damage, Kaidan can weaken enemies by siphoning their health and overloading synthetics with power surges, and he can incapacitate them by lifting them off the ground.

Even Cryo Blast, one of his best powers, can be used more to slow down and freeze enemies than destroy them. Once frozen or chilled, however, enemies are more susceptible to taking damage or shattering altogether.

Since Kaidan can only carry an assault rifle or pistol, consider using him on missions where a good mid- to long-range weapon is handy. Kaidan can also help tank when necessary.

He may not be as effective as James in the tank role, but if Kaidan's Barrier power is upgraded properly at Ranks 4 and 6, then he can sustain damage better than his squadmates.

His passive power, Alliance Officer, will also help increase his durability, allowing him to take even more damage while tanking.

POWERS

OVERLOAD

Overload electronics with this power surge, stunning your enemy. Effective against shields, barriers, and synthetics. Not as effective against organics.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 16 sec.; Damage: 220

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Chain Overload: Hit one additional target within 8 meters with 60% less damage

Rank 4b—Damage: Increase damage by 30%

Rank 5a—Neural Shock: Incapacitate weaker organic enemies for a short duration

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 6a—Chain Overload: Increase damage by 15%. Hit one additional target within 8 meters with 60% less damage

Rank 6b—Shield Damage: Increase damage to barriers and shields by an additional 100%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

By far one of the most useful powers against synthetics, Overload can temporarily fry electrical equipment like turrets and singe synthetic foes.

At Ranks 1 through 3, you gain a standard recharge speed and damage increase, so you could stop upgrading at Rank 3 if you don't plan on making

Overload an integral part of Kaidan's attack arsenal.

However, during missions where you encounter geth or other synthetic opponents, Kaidan can still prove to be very useful.

Rank 4 Analysis

If you do make Overload a more integral part of Kaidan's attack arsenal, then consider upgrading to Rank 4a. This will increase the amount of targets he can affect by one.

So instead of overloading only one enemy at a time, he can stun multiple enemies with each Overload blast. Rank 4b is a standard damage increase. Select this if you want Kaidan to focus more dealing damage to individual enemies.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you gain the option to stun organic foes and synthetics. For players who want a good all-purpose tank, select Rank 5a.

The Neural Shock ability will expand Kaidan's role across a number of missions since he'll no longer be effective against synthetic targets alone.

Rank 5b increases Overload's recharge speed, allowing him to use the skill more frequently in battle. The trade-off between Ranks 5a and 5b is simple: If you want to use Kaidan against more varied types of enemies, select 5a.

If you want to use Kaidan more frequently in battle to stun enemies en masse, select Rank 5b.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Rank 4a, Rank 6a will increase how many targets Kaidan can reach with an Overload blast by one and will increase the damage it inflicts by 15 percent.

The choice is simple: If you selected Rank 4a, make the same selection here and Kaidan can stun small groups of enemies with one Overload blast.

Not only will he incapacitate more enemies at once, but also you'll expend less power to do it. At Rank 6b, you can increase the damage dealt to barriers and shields, making Kaidan extremely effective against all shielded foes.

CRYO BLAST

Flash-freeze and shatter unprotected enemies. Slow down the rest. Weaken armor. Frozen targets won't regenerate health.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 8 sec.; Freeze Duration: 4 sec.; Movement Speed: -15%

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Improve recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Duration: Increase power duration by 40%

Rank 4a—Duration: Increase power duration by 60%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 2 meters

Rank 5a—Speed Reduction: Decrease movement speed of chilled targets by an additional 20%

Rank 5b—Cryo Explosion: Increase damage to chilled and frozen targets by 10%

Rank 6a—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 50%

Rank 6b—Frozen Vulnerability: Increase damage to frozen and chilled targets by 15%; weaken armored targets by an additional 25%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

By upgrading Cryo Blast up to Rank 3, you can increase the duration of freeze effects to nearly 6 seconds while decreasing the recharge speed for the power to 6.4 seconds.

That means that if you use Cryo Blast heavily, Kaidan can fire a blast nearly every 6 seconds and freeze enemies for about the same time.

So if you time things properly, you can theoretically keep a target frozen indefinitely until the rest of the squad can finish them off.

This skill also works as a "source" power for cryo explosions. Once affected by Cryo Blast, targets can then be detonated using a detonator power like Concussive Shot, Shockwave, or Overload.

Rank 4 Analysis

The main benefit of Cryo Blast is that you can slow enemies and potentially freeze them in place, removing them from the equation on the battlefield.

At Rank 4 you must choose whether to slow singular enemies for longer periods of time (great against larger, more powerful enemies) or to slow multiple enemies for less time.

Make your selection here based on whether you want Kaidan to focus more on crowd control or damage output.

Rank 5 Analysis

At Rank 5, you can augment damage inflicted to enemies affected by Cryo Blast with Rank 5b.

Once the enemy is frozen or chilled, the cryo effects make enemies that are frozen or chilled take 10 percent more damage from all sources; this is useful on bigger enemies as a debuff.

If crowd control is your goal, select Rank 5a. This slows down enemy movement by an additional 20 percent, making foes move 35 percent slower overall.

When combined with Rank 4a, the decrease in movement speed makes for an overwhelming advantage on the battlefield. Not only will foes move slower, but also they'll do so for nearly seven seconds.

Rank 6 Analysis

Players who want to focus on using more powers over weapons should select Rank 6a. This will increase the recharge speed for Cryo Blast and allow Kaidan to use it far more frequently on the battlefield.

This is best when using Kaidan as a crowd-control specialist. However, if you want to make Kaidan an explosive specialist, select Rank 6b to increase the target's vulnerability.

When used in conjunction with Overload, Kaidan can obliterate enemies on the battlefield with ease.

BARRIER (UNIQUE)

Reinforce armor with this Biotic field. Detonate the field to lift and dangle nearby targets. Reduce all forms of damage taken. Slow power use.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 20 sec.; Damage Reduction: 15%; Blast Damage: 90; Blast Radius: 3 meters

Rank 2—Recharge: Increase recharge speed after detonation by 25%

Rank 3—Blast Effect: Increase the damage, force, and radius of the detonation by 20%

Rank 4a—Blast Effect: Increase the damage, force, and radius of the detonation by 30%

Rank 4b—Barrier Strength: Decrease damage taken by 5%

Rank 5a—Shield Recharge: Increase shield regeneration rate by 15% while Barrier is active

Rank 5b—Power Synergy: Increase damage and force by 25% while Barrier is active

Rank 6a—Power Recharge: Reduce power speed penalty by 30%

Rank 6b—Barrier Strength: Decrease damage taken by 10%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Barrier is a unique power that serves as a temporary defensive measure with an offensive kick. When activated, it increases shields and reduces all damage taken, be it melee, weapons, or powers.

Once detonated, however, it releases a blast effect that inflicts a decent amount of damage on nearby enemies and lifts them into the air. Overall, this is an extremely valuable power in Kaidan's arsenal.

Not only can it increase his shields and damage enemies, but it also makes enemies vulnerable to weapons fire from the rest of the squad as they dangle in midair.

Rank 4 Analysis

Your first option when upgrading Barrier is to either lean toward damage output (Rank 4a) or defense (Rank 4b). This will determine whether Kaidan will help tank during missions or be another offensive weapon on your crew.

Rank 5 Analysis

Another choice between offense or defense, Rank 5 can either grant Kaidan the ability to regenerate his shield 15 percent quicker (allowing him to tank and stay in fights longer) or increase the damage and force while Barrier is active.

The best course of action here is to keep your Rank 4 selection in mind.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final rank upgrade will determine whether Kaidan leans more toward Biotic combat (6a) or tanking (6b). If Kaidan is focusing on Biotic combat, then select Rank 6a.

The reduction in power speed penalty means that Barrier won't deplete as quickly when used.

However, if you've chosen Rank 4b, then also select Rank 6b to further increase Barrier Strength and reduce damage. At this level, Kaidan can tank with the best of them.

REAVE (UNIQUE)

Drain a target's health and disrupt their resistances, receiving increased damage protection while this power is in effect. Effective against barriers and armor.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 16 sec.; Damage Per Second: 60; Duration: 4 sec.; Damage Reduction: 15%

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Duration: Increase power duration by 35%

Rank 4a—Duration: Increase power duration by 40%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 3 meters

Rank 5a—Damage Reduction: Increase damage protection by 10%

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 35%

Rank 6a—Barriers and Armor: Increase armor and barrier effectiveness by 75%

Rank 6b—Damage and Duration: Increase damage and duration by 30%. Increase damage protection bonus by 15%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

This vampiric power allows Kaidan to deplete a target's health while increasing his own damage resistance. Better still, it is effective against barriers (shields) and armor.

Like Barrier, this multifaceted skill can either make Kaidan a better tank or increase his ability to inflict damage.

By upgrading it to Rank 3, you can decrease the recharge speed for this power to less than 13 seconds while increasing the duration of its effect to nearly 6 seconds.

If you stop upgrading the power at Rank 3, Kaidan can use the skill to weaken single enemies and increase his tanking ability.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you must decide whether Kaidan will affect multiple enemies in a three-meter radius (4b), weakening multiple targets at once, or if you want his Reave power duration to last 40 percent longer (4a).

Make your selection here based on what you plan to choose for Rank 6. If power duration is your goal, then select Rank 4a.

This will benefit Kaidan greatly if you eventually select Rank 6b. However, if you'd like to impact more enemies each time Kaidan uses Reave, select Rank 4b.

Rank 5 Analysis

Once again, you're given a choice between gearing Kaidan to be a tank (Rank 5a) or a damage dealer by increasing the recharge speed of his Reave ability (Rank 5b).

If you've already started making Kaidan a tank, there's no point in selecting Rank 5b.

The increased power duration of Rank 5a means he'll stay stronger longer and make him more capable of sustaining one-on-one combat against a tough enemy or one-on-many combat if the need ever arises.

Rank 6 Analysis

Your final choice when upgrading Rank 6 is a bit more difficult. Both options increase the effectiveness of Kaidan's damage resistance, but in different ways.

Where Rank 6a increases the damage done to armor and barrier by a whopping 75 percent, Rank 6b increases the damage and duration of Reave's health-siphoning ability, thereby increasing his shields and armor as a result.

The main difference between both options is that Rank 6a protects him better while Rank 6b inflicts more damage on enemies at the cost of less defense.

ALLIANCE OFFICER (UNIQUE)

Boost weapon damage, health, and shields/barriers.

Rank 1—Health and Shield Bonus: 15%; Power Damage Bonus: 15%

Rank 2—Damage and Durability: Increase health, shield, and power damage bonuses by 15%

Rank 3—Damage and Durability: Increase health, shield, and power damage bonuses by 15%

Rank 4a—Weapon Damage: Increase weapon damage by 20%

Rank 4b—Durability: Increase health and shields by 30%

Rank 5a—Biotic Damage: Increase Biotic power damage by 30%

Rank 5b—Tech Damage: Increase Tech power damage by 30%

Rank 6a—Squad Bonus: Increase squadmate Tech and Biotic power damage by 10%

Rank 6b—Squad Bonus: Increase recharge speed of squadmates' shields by 15%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

At Ranks 1 through 3, Alliance Officer increases Kaidan's damage and durability up to 45 percent across the board.

These three upgrades alone make it possible for Kaidan to tank during missions. However, the increase in power damage also makes it possible for Kaidan to rely more on Biotic powers and less on weapon damage.

If you want Kaidan to be a Biotic specialist, then upgrade at least to Rank 3 for this passive power.

Rank 4 Analysis

Players who want Kaidan to tank should select Rank 4b. This will increase his health and shield bonus to an impressive 75 percent.

Kaidan will be able to take more damage and, in conjunction with other powers like Barrier and Reave, make him an impressive damage-absorbing squadmate.

If you want to compensate for Kaidan's Biotic leaning, select Rank 4a. This increases his weapon damage and balances out his damage output.

Rank 5 Analysis

Both options in Rank 5 increase Kaidan's ability to deal damage. Rank 5a augments Kaidan's Biotic damage by 30 percent, making powers like Cryo Blast increasingly deadly.

Similarly, Rank 5b augments Kaidan's Tech damage, making powers like Reave more deadly. Since fewer skills will benefit from a Tech damage increase, we suggest going with Rank 5a.

Rank 6 Analysis

Like Rank 5, this rank augments one target but in different ways. Rank 6 is a squad bonus.

Either increase your squad's Tech and Biotic power damage for the squad (6a) or increase the recharge speed of the entire squad's shields (6b).

The difference between both options is whether you want Kaidan to support your squad's damage output or defensive capabilities.

BUILD OPTIONS

CROWD CONTROL/TANK

- **Overload:** 4a, 5a, 6a
- **Cryo Blast:** 4b, 5a, 6a
- **Barrier:** 4b, 6b
- **Reave:** 5a, 6a or 6b
- **Alliance Officer:** 4b

Kaidan's unique skill set makes him a perfect candidate for crowd control or tanking. Powers like Overload and Cryo Blast can stun and slow enemies long enough for the rest of the squad to attack.

Use these skills on groups of enemies to slow their advance and halt their attacks. Similarly, skills like Barrier and Reave increase Kaidan's defensive abilities, allowing him to sustain more damage.

When all of these powers are combined, Kaidan can lead a charge and distract enemies either by slowing them or absorbing damage, while the rest of the squad inflicts the majority of damage.

Biotic/Tech Damage

- **Overload:** 4b
- **Cryo Blast:** 4a, 5b
- **Barrier:** 4a, 5b
- **Reave:** 5b, 6b
- **Alliance Officer:** 4a, 5a or 5b, 6a

When upgraded properly, Kaidan can also become an extremely effective damage dealer. Select upgrades that augment power damage.

This will ensure he can use offensive powers like Cryo Blast more frequently.

Better still, he can lead with Cryo Blast, follow up with Overload, and create a massive Cryo Explosion that can destroy one foe while inflicting damage on other nearby enemies.

Alliance Officer Rank 4a will also help increase weapon damage in order to balance his damage output, while both Rank 5 options for Alliance Officer will also augment damage output.

ROMANCE

Kaidan is a romance option for female Shepard. He can be romanced by a new Shepard and by a Shepard who did not romance him in previous games.

Take time to go to the Citadel and visit him in the hospital early and often in the game in order to build up intimacy.

KEY CONVERSATIONS

On Mars, Kaidan remains distrustful of Shepard and Shepard's relationship with Cerberus. While it's tempting to get angry, choosing the Paragon options allows Shepard to defend himself without alienating Kaidan.

Later, Shepard has multiple chances to visit Kaidan in the hospital:

Immediately after arriving at the Citadel for the first time (Kaidan is unconscious but will learn that Shepard came to see him), after completing the mission at Palaven (Kaidan is in bed and injured), and once more before finishing the Genophage missions (Kaidan is up on his feet, preparing to be discharged).

These conversations give Shepard the chance to build up intimacy and to build up a level of trust to ensure that Kaidan won't force Shepard to kill him in the confrontation on the Citadel.

TIP

Bring Kaidan a bottle of TM-88 Peruvian whiskey in the hospital as a gift to increase intimacy.

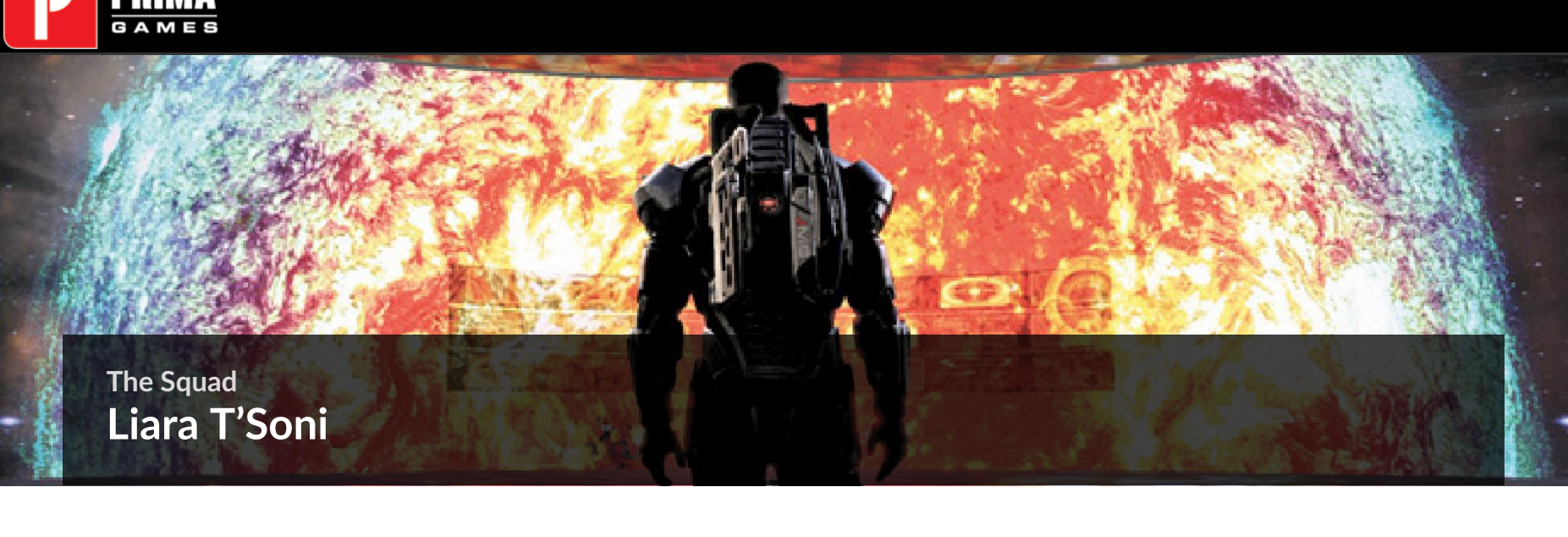
If Shepard had a relationship with Kaidan in *Mass Effect 1* but subsequently pursued another relationship with him or her in *Mass Effect 2* , Kaidan is angry and hurt during his talks at the hospital.

Apologize and make it clear that you want to be with him. This is key to continuing a relationship and getting back his trust.

KEY MOMENT

Kaidan offers to meet Shepard on the Citadel at the café on the Presidium Commons.

If Shepard has established high enough intimacy, Kaidan brings up the possibility of a relationship (or continuing the existing relationship).



The Squad

Liara T’Soni

Dr. Liara T’Soni is an asari information broker with a background in scientific research on Prothean technology.

Born on Thessia in 2077, she is the only child of the late Matriarch Benezia, although mother and daughter became estranged in the years before Benezia was indoctrinated by the Reaper known as Sovereign.

T’Soni is also a highly trained Biotic who served under Commander Shepard aboard the *SSV Normandy* before the ship was destroyed in a Collector attack.

Before she became involved in galactic affairs, Dr. T’Soni spent 50 years researching the Protheans’ technology and the mystery of their extinction.

She now spends her time running her information network, looking for anything to give them an edge against the Reapers.

PREVIOUSLY ON *MASS EFFECT*

Liara is a returning character from *Mass Effect 1* and *Mass Effect 2* . After the events of the *Mass Effect 2* , Liara became the new Shadow Broker.

In addition to fighting in Shepard’s squad, she can offer special insight and unique (sometimes disturbing) information based on her nearly limitless intelligence network.

Liara has matured since the events in the first two games: She’s more confident and driven, determined to take action against the Reapers instead of just reacting to their plans.

While the Shadow Broker has a reputation for being ruthless, Liara hasn’t lost her compassion or curiosity.

She’s simply better equipped via her information network to see the entire scope of the war, and she knows that casualties will be high before it’s over.

In her heart, Liara can’t help but believe the galaxy will prevail against the Reapers if they work together.

TIP

There’s a terminal in Liara’s office that offers you things like weapon damage bonuses, power cooldown bonuses, store discounts, and more.

Many of these bonuses become available when you retrieve certain Galaxy at War assets.

TACTICAL ROLE

Liara is a surprisingly versatile squad member. Her ability to wield disruptive and destructive powers make her one of the best people to keep in your squad across nearly every mission.

She is also one of the few squad members who doesn’t excel against one type of foe—synthetic and organic foes alike are susceptible to her abilities.

Since she can only carry an SMG and pistols, she doesn’t have a lot of destructive power with weapons.

When she’s in your squad, make heavy use of powers like Singularity to redirect enemies, create bottlenecks, and set traps.

Singularity is her most powerful tool when trying to control crowds.

Better still, Singularity, Warp, and Stasis are all source powers, perfect for other squadmates with detonate powers to ignite and create explosive power combinations.

POWERS

Warp

Rip your enemy apart at a molecular level. Stop targeted enemy from regenerating health. Weaken armor.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 16 sec.; Damage: 250; Duration: 10 sec.

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%

Rank 4b—Detonate: Increase force, damage, and impact radius of combo detonations by 50%

Rank 5a—Lasting Damage: Increase damage by 40%; increase duration by 60%

Rank 5b—Expose: Increase weapon damage taken by a target by 15%; increase power damage taken by 15% for 10 seconds

Rank 6a—Pierce: Increase damage to barriers and armor by 50%; weaken armored targets by an additional 25%

Rank 6b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 35%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Warp is a great power, perfect to use against Reapers and Cerberus scum. Even at low ranks it can deal 300 points of damage on an enemy for up to 10 seconds.

You can stop upgrading at Rank 3 and use Warp strictly as a source power for power combinations, but its value is far beyond using simply as a source, so consider making Warp one of your go-to skills when Liara is on your team.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can either increase damage (Rank 4a) up to 375 points of damage, a worthwhile investment, or you can add a unique detonate ability (Rank 4b).

This benefit is gained only when using Warp as a source power and another power is used to detonate it.

When it does, Rank 4b will increase all aspects of the detonation by 50 percent. When combined with Pure Biotic upgrades, Rank 4b is an integral choice in Warp’s upgrade tree.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5a, Lasting Damage, increases both damage and duration of Warp, making it deadlier and longer lasting. It may not be fancy, but the selection amplifies two of Warp’s three most important components.

If you plan on frequently using Warp as a stand-alone attack, then select Rank 5a.

Expose, Rank 5b, increases both weapon and power damage to targets affected by Warp. This is useful when you want to weaken enemies and allow your squadmates to inflict additional damage while Liara’s powers recharge.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final upgrade tree in Warp either increases its recharge speed to maximum, lowering the recharge speed to 10 seconds (Rank 6b), or increases piercing ability to weaken barriers and armor (Rank 6a).

Like Rank 5b, the benefits of Rank 6a allow your squadmates to pour on additional damage to affected enemies.

This particular upgrade is perfect when facing Brutes, Atlas Mechs, and Banshees.

Singularity

Create a sphere of dark energy that traps and dangles enemies caught in its field.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 9 sec.; duration: 4 sec.; Radius: 1.5 meters

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Duration and Radius: Increase Singularity’s hold duration by 20%; increase impact radius by 20%

Rank 4a—Duration: Increase Singularity’s hold duration by 30%; additional enemies can be lifted before Singularity fades

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 25%

Rank 5a—Lift Damage: Inflict 20 damage per second to lifted targets

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 30%

Rank 6a—Expand: Expand the Singularity field by 35% for 10 seconds

Rank 6b—Detonate: Detonate Singularity when the field dies to inflict 300 damage across 5 meters

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Singularity may be Liara’s greatest power.

Capable of lifting several enemies into the air (when upgraded properly), this lasting effect can be used to flush out enemies from behind cover; to lift them into the air, rendering them helpless; and even to function as a source power to create explosive power combinations.

At Rank 3, a single foe can be rendered harmless for up to nearly 5 seconds. Better still, that’s nearly 5 seconds that Singularity can serve as a source power.

Rank 4 Analysis

Rank 4 offers two very useful potential upgrades. Either increase the length of Singularity’s duration and keep enemies suspended in the air longer (Rank 4a) or widen its reach by increasing its radius (Rank 4b).

Both are worthwhile upgrades, but Rank 4a is slightly more useful since it will allow you to pick up even more enemies with a single blast.

Upgrade to Rank 4 and unleash a Singularity blast near a crowded area to create a bottleneck for attackers.

Even if you don’t manage to get multiple enemies in the blast, other enemies will be forced to reroute since the upgraded Singularity will last longer.

Rank 5 Analysis

If you plan on using Singularity often, perhaps to create multiple explosive power combinations, then select Rank 5b.

This will increase Singularity’s recharge speed and decrease your waiting time between blasts to less than 6 seconds.

That means that you could potentially catch enemies in a massive explosion every 6 seconds. If you want to focus on inflicting damage, then select Rank 6a.

This will add 20 points of damage per second for the duration of Singularity. If you chose Rank 4a, then that’s an extra 120 points of damage.

Rank 6 Analysis

At Rank 6, you can expand the Singularity’s field by 35 percent for 10 seconds. If you’ve chosen upgrade Rank 4b, then your Singularity field will be 2.18 meters around.

Rank 6a will expand on those 2.18 meters by 35 percent for 10 seconds. By making Singularity last longer and reach farther, you can create countless problems for groups of enemies.

Your other option at Rank 6 is to detonate Singularity when the field dies, inflicting 300 extra points of damage across 5 meters.

Not only does this remove the need for a detonator power to be added in order to detonate Singularity, but it also reaches farther and causes a decent amount of damage.

If you chose Rank 5a, then you could potentially inflict up to 420 damage with one Singularity blast.

Stasis (Unique)

Stop an enemy in its tracks with this powerful mass effect field. No effect on armored targets. Enemies eventually break out of Stasis after taking major damage.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 12 sec.; Duration: 6 sec

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Duration: Increase duration by 30%

Rank 4a—Duration: Increase duration by 40%

Rank 4b—Stasis Strength: Deal 150% more damage to targets before Stasis breaks

Rank 5a—Bonus Power: Use two powers in a row by giving the first power a 30% chance to cause no cooldown

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 6a—Bubble: Unleash a Stasis bubble to trap enemies that walk into it

Rank 6b—Vulnerability: Increase all damage done to target by 50%; deal 35% more damage to targets before Stasis breaks

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Like Warp and Singularity, Stasis can serve as an extremely useful disruptive power. A single blast of Stasis can slow an enemy down entirely.

Not only will you gain the advantage of moving faster than the enemy, but also the enemy will be stopped.

It actually freezes them entirely and affects targets through shields, so use it to freeze Phantoms, Centurions, Engineers, and other foes.

Rank 4 Analysis

By selecting Rank 4a, you can increase the duration of Stasis to 10.2 seconds. That’s more than enough time to either execute a power combination or allow your squad to focus on the target with weapon fire and obliterate them.

If you want to free your squad to concentrate on other foes instead, then select Rank 4b. This will increase the amount of damage a target in Stasis sustains by 150 percent.

Then, while a foe is in Stasis, you can turn your weapon on it and increase damage without the need of other squad members. If you have Warp Ammo active, this becomes an even more deadly combination.

Rank 5 Analysis

With so many useful powers at her disposal, Liara could benefit greatly from the ability to use two powers back-to-back.

Select Rank 5a, Bonus Power, to gain a 30 percent chance at skipping a power cooldown when using Stasis.

When effective, you could potentially use Stasis and immediately follow up with a second power nearly one-third of the time.

This would allow you to create explosive power combinations from the Stasis source power almost every 10 seconds.

If you’re not the gambling type, then select Rank 5b. This will lower the time it takes to recharge stasis to less than 8 seconds.

Rank 6 Analysis

Rank 6a grants Stasis a unique added effect. A bubble traps enemies that are foolish enough to walk into it. Like Singularity, Rank 6a is best suited for causing bottlenecks and traps that your squadmates can then capitalize on.

Rank 6b can also benefit your squad: It increases an enemy’s vulnerability, increasing the amount of damage they take while in Stasis.

Warp Ammo (Unique)

Blast vulnerable opponents already lifted by Biotics for a damage bonus, and weaken the armor of grounded targets. More weapon damage. More damage to barriers and armor.

Rank 1—Warp Ammo: Health Damage Bonus: +10%; Barrier Damage: +20%; Armor Weakening: -25%; Lifted Target Damage: +50%

Rank 2—Biotic Combo: Increase damage to lifted targets by 25%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase health and armor damage bonuses by 4%; increase barrier damage by 8%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase health and armor damage by 6%; increase barrier damage by 12%

Rank 4b—Squad Bonus: Squadmates gain Warp Ammo at 50% effectiveness

Rank 5a—Ammo Capacity: Increase ammo capacity by 30%

Rank 5b—Headshot: Increase headshot damage by 25%

Rank 6a—Damage: Increase health and armor damage by 10%; increase barrier damage by 20%

Rank 6b—Enhanced Warp: Increase damage to lifted targets by 50%; weaken armored targets by an additional 25%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Warp Ammo is specifically designed to work well with the destructive abilities of nearly all of Liara’s other powers.

At Rank 2, for example, it increases damage to lifted targets by 25 percent. When coupled with Singularity, this makes for significantly high damage, especially if Singularity is upgraded to Rank 5a, Lift Damage.

At the very least, upgrade Warp Ammo to Rank 3 to grant Liara useful ammo power.

Rank 4 Analysis

Like other ammo powers, Warp Ammo can either increase in damage at Rank 4a or grant your squadmates the ability to use it, albeit at 50 percent effectiveness, at Rank 4b.

Your choice should depend on how you expect to use Liara in combat. If she’ll be a main source of damage output on the squad, select Rank 4a.

If you want to complement the squad with other ammo powers, select Rank 4b.

Rank 5 Analysis

Since Liara can carry only an SMG or a pistol, then make your selection for the Rank 5 upgrade based on her primary role in combat.

Rank 5a increases her ammo count, which is great for weapons that expend a lot of ammunition, like SMGs.

Rank 5b increases the amount of damage she inflicts with a headshot, most likely while using pistols. If you intend on using Singularity more than any other power, then select Rank 5a.

Enemies will be harder to hit in midair, so an SMG’s short bursts will increase your accuracy per bullet. If you intend on using Stasis more, then select Rank 5b.

Slowed, grounded enemies will be easier to hit with pistol headshots, so the extra 25 percent damage will be of great help.

Rank 6 Analysis

Even though both Rank 6 upgrades increase the amount of damage you can deal on targets, you must choose whether to increase bonus damage to health and barrier (Rank 6a) or to weaken armor and increase damage on lifted targets (Rank 6b).

Since both choices increase the amount of damage enemies can take, make your selection based on whether you will be using Warp Ammo in conjunction with Singularity more often than not.

Rank 6b is the perfect upgrade for Liara builds that favor heavy use of Singularity.

Pure Biotic (Unique)

Boost Biotic and defensive abilities.

Rank 1—Health and Shield Bonus: 10%; Power Recharge Speed Bonus: 20%

Rank 2—Durability and Recharge: Increase health and shield bonuses by 10%; increase recharge speed bonus by 20%

Rank 3—Durability and Recharge: Increase health and shield bonuses by 10%; increase recharge speed bonus by 20%

Rank 4a—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed bonus of all powers by 40%

Rank 4b—Durability: Increase health and shield bonuses by 20%

Rank 5a—Weapon Damage: Increase weapon damage by 20%

Rank 5b—Duration and Force: Increase power force and duration by 30%

Rank 6a—Squad Bonus: Increase recharge speed of all squadmate Biotic powers by 10%

Rank 6b—Singularity Recharge: Increase recharge speed of Liara’s Singularity by 100% Build Options

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Players who want a Biotic powerhouse on their squad should invest heavily in Liara’s Pure Biotic passive power. Even at Rank 3 alone, she gains a 30 percent bonus to her health and shields, making her tougher on the battlefield.

She also gets a 60 percent power recharge bonus, meaning she will recharge all power usage 60 percent faster.

When coupled with a specific power’s recharge speed upgrades (like Stasis’s Rank 2 and Rank 5b), Liara will gain the ability to use her powers more frequently than any other soldier on the battlefield.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4a, you can increase Liara’s power recharge speed even more, up to 100 percent. Rank 4b, on the other hand, will increase her shield and health bonus to 50 percent.

Since Rank 4 will either max out your power recharge speed or your health and shields, then you must decide what kind of role Liara will play on the battlefield.

If you’re using her powers to augment her weapon damage, then select Rank 4a. Increase her health and shield bonus to keep her in the fight longer.

If you plan on using her as a Biotic specialist, then select Rank 4a. You’ll increase your power recharge speed to 100 percent and gain a significant power advantage.

Rank 5 Analysis

Like Rank 4, the Rank 5 options are designed to either make Liara a weapon-proficient fighter (Rank 5a) or a power-heavy hitter (Rank 5b).

Rank 5a increases weapon damage, further augmenting other upgrades like Warp Ammo’s Headshots.

Rank 5b, however, increases Liara’s power force and duration. This upgrade stacks with all other power-enhancing upgrades.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final upgrade selection depends on whether you want to make Singularity Liara’s main go-to power. If so, the choice is simple: select Rank 6a.

The whopping 100 percent increase in Singularity’s recharge speed means she can potentially unleash Singularity nearly every 2.5 seconds if you’ve upgraded Singularity’s Rank 5b.

If you don’t plan on using Singularity often, then select Rank 6a to give your squad increased recharge speed to their Biotic powers.

BUILD OPTIONS

Biotic: Crowd Control

- **Warp:** 6b
- **Singularity:** 4a or 4b, 5b, 6a
- **Stasis:** 4a, 5b, 6a
- **Pure Biotic:** 4a, 5b, 6b

Liara’s most effective role on the battlefield is to control crowds, disrupt enemies, and otherwise weaken foes for the rest of the squad to mop up.

Powers like Singularity, Stasis, and Warp are all designed to disrupt enemy movements and flush them out of cover.

Keep her weapon loadout as light as possible, and bypass all weapon damage modifiers in the upgrade trees.

Instead, select all upgrades that augment power recharge speed in order to increase Liara’s power usage on the battlefield.

Rely heavily on Singularity and upgrade Pure Biotic to Rank 6b to make the best use of it.

Biotic or Weapon Damage

- **Warp:** 4a, 5a
- **Singularity:** 5a, 6b
- **Stasis:** 4b, 6b
- **Warp Ammo:** 4a, 6a
- **Pure Biotic:** 5a, 6b

Liara can also become an efficient damage dealer. Many of the upgrade choices can increase either weapon or power damage.

Select these options instead of increasing recharge speed and make the best use of Liara’s damage-dealing abilities.

If you favor Biotic damage and power combinations, then rely a bit more on powers like Stasis, Warp, and Singularity.

All three abilities function as source powers that can be detonated with a squadmate’s detonator power, thereby creating large explosions that can inflict damage on nearby foes as well as the main target.

ROMANCE

Liara is a romance option for both male and female Shepard. She can be romanced by a new Shepard or a Shepard who did not romance her in previous games.

Because she joins Shepard early in the game, there are many chances to talk to her and build up intimacy.

Key Conversations

Liara’s first conversation aboard the Normandy offers a chance for players who romanced her in Mass Effect 1 to explicitly declare that they want to continue the relationship.

This does not lock the player into the relationship, but it does ensure that the option to commit to Liara is available during the key conversation.

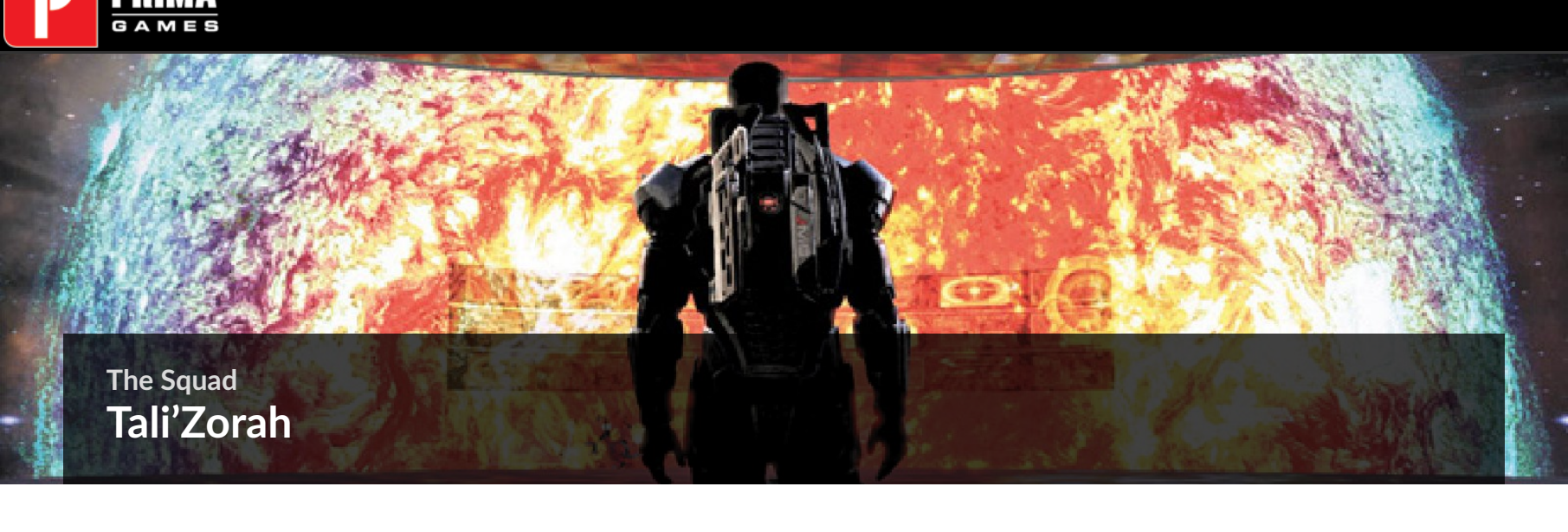
She can also be found on the Citadel at a café on the Presidium Commons (before the second “Priority: Citadel” mission), reading war reports and trying to use the intel she has found to help you.

If Shepard speaks with her enough, Liara will also ask to come up to Shepard’s cabin, where she will show Shepard a time capsule she has made to tell future generations Shepard’s story if they fail to stop the Reapers.

Key Moment

Eventually she will ask to meet Shepard on the Citadel for a quiet moment. If Shepard has spoken to her enough times, this conversation gives Shepard the chance to commit to a relationship with her.

Also, while not specifically tied to the relationship, the conversation immediately after the “Priority: Thessia” mission is a major moment for Liara that any Shepard in a relationship with her will want to see.



The Squad

Tali'Zorah

Tali'Zorah, a quarian machinist, was born in 2161 on the liveship Rayya.

During her Pilgrimage—a rite of passage in which quarians prove their worth to the fleet—she recovered a geth memory core that proved a rogue Spectre, Saren Arterius, was working with the geth.

Consequently, Tali'Zorah became a crew member of the SSV *Normandy* , where she served under Commander Shepard during the Battle of the Citadel.

Tali'Zorah returned to the Migrant Fleet following the destruction of the first Normandy.

Soon after, the Admiralty Board sent her to the former quarian colony of Haestrom to recover data on the planet's dying sun.

Most of her team was killed when they fell under attack from the geth, but Tali'Zorah was narrowly rescued by Shepard and the crew of the rebuilt Normandy.

The quarian rejoined Shepard to help oppose the Collector threat, but her current whereabouts are unknown.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

A returning character from *Mass Effect 1* and *Mass Effect 2* , Tali joins Shepard again, and her character has matured during her time away.

She's either an admiral with the quarians or has had her exile rescinded so that she can bring her expertise against the geth to the current war.

Tali's people are fighting desperately to survive and reclaim their homeworld, and Tali thinks the fight was stupid, but she is, as always, loyal to the quarians.

Tali continues as a romance option for male Shepard, and Tali has now gotten over a lot of her inexperienced stammering.

She's more of an equal for Shepard now, and there's a more playful edge to her banter.

The default assumption in *Mass Effect 3* is that Tali survived the suicide mission from *Mass Effect 2* but has been exiled by her people.

She joins Shepard after Shepard meets her people and is a required squad member on the geth Dreadnought and Reaper base missions.

However, if you imported a save in which Tali did not survive the suicide mission in *Mass Effect 2* , there is no full replacement character for her in the game.

On the geth Dreadnought mission, Admiral Xen accompanies you but not as a full squad member. She stays back in safe positions and mainly talks to you over the radio.

During the Reaper base mission on Rannoch, you can choose a squad normally, and Admiral Raan takes the place of Tali for the final decision between the geth and the quarians.

TACTICAL ROLE

Tali's weapon arsenal is limited to a shotgun and a pistol. This combination of raw destructive power and precision shooting is the perfect example of Tali's range of potential.

Her disruptive powers make her a skilled crowd-control specialist. Use powers like Sabotage and both drone powers to disrupt enemy movements and force them to bend to your will.

For example, if you want a pesky Guardian to turn around and give you its vulnerable side, assign a combat or defense drone to the Guardian and it will appear behind the guarded enemy.

When it does, the Guardian will turn around and expose its back. Other benefits to drone use are obvious, as drones will frequently flush out enemies from behind cover and even chase them around corners and other cover.

With skills like Energy Drain and Sabotage, Tali can weaken foes and turn enemies into allies. Between her ability to summon drones and recruit enemies, assigning Tali to your squad is like assigning three extra damage dealers.

POWERS

COMBAT DRONE

Deploy this attack drone to stun targets and draw enemy fire.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 10 sec.; Drone Damage: 40; Drone Shields: 500

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Shields and Damage: Increase damage and shields by 30%

Rank 4a—Shields and Damage: Increase damage and shields by 40%

Rank 4b—Detonate: Drone explodes when destroyed, dealing 156 points of damage across a 5-meter radius

Rank 5a—Shock: Upgrade drone's short-range attack to deal 130 points of damage across a 2.5-meter radius; drone stuns enemies for a short duration

Rank 5b—Shields and Damage: Increase damage and shields by 50%

Rank 6a—Rockets: Upgrade drone with long-range rockets that deal 130 points of damage across a 1.5-meter radius

Rank 6b—Chain Lightning: Upgrade drone's electrical pulse to jump and hit three additional targets

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Combat Drone is one of Tali's most useful powers. With it she can summon a drone capable of distracting and destroying foes at higher Ranks.

At Ranks 1 through 3, the combat drones won't inflict much damage on foes, but it will serve as a worthwhile complement to any squad.

After all, even though it won't dish out much damage, it will absorb up to 650 points of damage. That's 650 points of damage that you or your squadmates won't have to incur.

Rank 5 Analysis

Another upgrade to shields and damage, Rank 5b can maximize the drone's damage at 88 points per attack and an impressive 1,100 to shields—that is, of course, only if you chose Rank 4a.

With 1,100 to shields, the combat drone will sustain an impressive amount of damage and stay longer on the battlefield.

Your other option is to add a Shock ability to the combat drone's arsenal. With it, the drone can deal even more damage (adding 170 points of damage), and stun foes for a short period of time.

Rank 4 Analysis

Rank 4a increases the drone's damage output and shields, meaning it can inflict more damage while taking more damage.

This upgrade is worthwhile in all cases, whether you're using the Combat Drone as a defensive decoy or as a damage-dealing complement to your squad.

If you want to use the drone as more of an offensive weapon, then select Rank 4b. This adds a detonate ability to the drone to make it blow up when destroyed and inflict up to 156 more points of damage on foes up to 5 meters.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final two upgrade options for the combat drone are both offensive abilities.

Rank 6a adds rockets to a potentially already lethal weapon. Each rocket will inflict 220 points of damage on top of the drone's base damage (or augmented damage if you upgraded Ranks 4a and 5b).

Another useful upgrade for players who want Tali to become a drone/damage-dealing specialist.

SABOTAGE

Sabotage weapons and hack synthetics. Compromised synthetics fight on your side. Affected weapons overheat.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 16 sec.; Hack Duration: 12 sec.; Radius: 12 meters; Backfire: 150

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Radius: Increase impact radius by 30%

Rank 4a—Duration: Increase power duration by 50%

Rank 4b—Backfire: Increase damage taken by 30% when enemy weapons overheat

Rank 5a—Explosive Hack: Synthetics explode when destroyed, dealing 120 points of damage across a 3-meter radius

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 6a—Berserk: Hacked synthetics fighting on your side move faster and do 100% more damage

Rank 6b—Tech Vulnerability: Increase all Tech power damage done to target by 100% for 10 seconds

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Sabotage is a useful skill whenever facing synthetic life-forms like the geth. With it, Tali can overwrite their programming and turn enemies into allies.

While this is already extremely effective in evening things out, the added explosive backfire can also help dwindle enemy numbers.

At Rank 3, Sabotage can impact enemies within a 3.25-meter radius and hack them for 12 seconds.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4, you can choose to either increase how long enemies remain hacked (Rank 4a) or how much damage they cause enemies when their weapons explode (Rank 4b).

Make your selection here based on Tali's eventual role in combat. If you want her to be a crowd-controlling tech maven, select Rank 4a.

This will keep the drones in the field longer and allow you to control your foes. If you want Tali to concentrate on damage-dealing, then select Rank 4b, Backfire.

This will increase the amount of damage enemies sustain to 195 points of damage.

Rank 5 Analysis

Rank 5 has two more upgrades similar to Rank 4. Here, however, choose Rank 5b to increase Sabotage's recharge speed. By doing so, Sabotage will be ready for use in under 11 seconds.

This may seem like a long time, but when the effect lasts 12 seconds, the benefits are clear: You'll be ready to launch another Sabotage attack before the first one completely wears off.

If you choose Rank 5a, then Sabotage will gain an explosive hack upgrade.

Affected synthetics will explode at the end of the hack and inflict an additional 120 points of damage to enemies within a three-meter radius.

If you want to concentrate on dealing damage, select Rank 5a—the added damage is worthwhile.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final upgrade selection for Sabotage can either bolster your hacked allies (Rank 6a) or increase all Tech damage done to the affected enemy for 10 seconds (Rank 6b).

If you want to use all hacked enemies as long as possible and turn them on their comrades, then select Berserk (Rank 6a). This will turn hacked foes into formidable allies.

Otherwise, select Rank 6b, Tech Vulnerability, to increase the amount of damage Tali can inflict.

This is best for players who don't want to bother with crowd control and instead want to focus on damage-dealing.

ENERGY DRAIN (UNIQUE)

Hit an enemy with this energy pulse to inflict damage and to steal barrier and shield power.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 16 sec.; Damage: 220; Radius: 1.5 meters; Shields Restored: 50%

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 20%

Rank 4a—Damage: Increase damage by 30%

Rank 4b—Radius: Increase impact radius by 100%

Rank 5a—Drain: Increase shield restoration rate by 50% when draining shields, barriers, or power from synthetic enemies

Rank 5b—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 6a—Damage: Increase damage by 40%

Rank 6b—Armor Boost: Reduce damage taken by 15% for 10 seconds by gaining a temporary layer of armor by draining shields, barriers, or energy from synthetics

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Energy Drain is a vampiric power that allows Tali to syphon away energy from a target and bolster her own shields.

By doing so, Tali not only weakens foes for you and the squad to eliminate, but she also increases her durability on the battlefield.

At Rank 3, this is a great power for players who want Tali to focus on damage-dealing.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4a, Energy Drain increases in damage potential, as it inflicts 330 points of damage on the targeted foe. The effects of this upgrade option are obvious, so select this if you want to focus on damage.

Rank 4b increases its radius to three meters. This will affect more nearby enemies and weaken them in small groups for the rest of the squad to finish off.

Rank 5 Analysis

While Rank 4 can affect two of Energy Drain's four facets (damage or radius), Rank 5 can affect one of the remaining two facets: recharge speed or shields restored.

Rank 5b affects Energy Drain's recharge speed, making it possible to use more frequently in battle. This is a simple upgrade option if you want Tali to rely heavily on Energy Drain.

If you select Rank 5a, Energy Drain becomes more efficient by restoring more of your shields while draining enemies. This will result in a direct increase in Tali's durability.

Rank 6 Analysis

The final upgrade selections also give you an offense or defense choice. Rank 6a increases Energy Drain's damage output significantly, raising Energy Drain's damage output to a potential 418 if you also chose Rank 4a.

By selecting Rank 6b, armor boost, you can further increase Tali's durability on the battlefield.

This is helpful for people who want to use Tali for more tactical maneuvers that may require more time spent running around the battlefield.

DEFENSE DRONE (UNIQUE)

Deploy this holographic drone to electrocute enemies within its firing range.

Rank 1—Recharge Speed: 12 sec.; Drone Damage: 25; Range: 5 meters

Rank 2—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 25%

Rank 3—Damage: Increase damage by 30%

Rank 4a—Duration: Increase duration by 100%

Rank 4b—Range: Increase attack range by 40%

Rank 5a—Attack Rate: Increase drone's attack rate by 50%

Rank 5b—Damage and Range: Increase damage by 50%; increase attack range by 60%

Rank 6a—Incapacitate: Gain a 30% chance to knock down an electrocuted enemy

Rank 6b—Chain Lightning: Damage up to two additional nearby targets

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Like Combat Drone, Defense Drone is an extremely versatile power capable of being upgraded to complement several different types of play styles. But don't let the name fool you.

Just because it's a defensive drone doesn't mean that it doesn't inflict damage.

It's not as effective as a combat drone at inflicting damage, but it will stun foes and serve as a distraction for lesser enemies.

If nothing else, upgrade this power to Rank 3 to create a lure or disruptive force on the battlefield for enemies.

Even if it can only inflict 32.5 points of damage (up to Rank 3), its benefits will far outweigh its limitations.

Rank 4 Analysis

Rank 4a will increase the drone's duration on the battlefield.

The obvious benefit is that you'll have a fourth "member" on your squad capable of dealing damage, stunning enemies, and most importantly, at this rank, absorbing damage in place of your crew.

If you want to increase how far the drone can attack enemies, then select Rank 4b.

This will increase its range up to seven meters, meaning it can stay farther from the enemy but still stun them. This is especially helpful when trying to flush out enemies from behind cover or around corners.

Rank 5 Analysis

When deciding on Rank 5 upgrades, base your decision on whether you want the drone to attack more frequently (Rank 5a) or more powerfully (Rank 5b).

Drones that attack more frequently can be especially more useful when facing large groups since they'll be able to attack more enemies in less time.

If you want to focus the drone's abilities on strict damage power (and range), then select Rank 5b. This will maximize the drone's damage output to 45 per blast.

This may not sound like much, but when the blast also has the added ability to stun foes, it's more than sufficient in battle.

Rank 6 Analysis

At the final rank, your defense drone can gain the ability to damage multiple targets per blast with a Chain Lightning upgrade (Rank 6b). If you want to use Tali as a Tech crowd-control expert, make this selection.

With it, the defense drone will assault multiple enemies within a close proximity, up to 10 meters if you chose both damage and range upgrades (Ranks 4b and 5b).

Rank 6a adds a 30 percent chance to knock down electrocuted enemies. This is also helpful in crowd-control. The longer an enemy is stunned or grounded, the less opportunities it will have to attack.

QUARIAN MACHINIST (UNIQUE)

Boost power recharge speed, shields/barriers, and health.

Rank 1—Health and Shield Bonus: 10%; Power Recharge Speed Bonus: 20%

Rank 2—Durability and Recharge: Increase health and shield bonuses by 10%; increase power recharge bonus by 20%

Rank 3—Durability and Recharge: Increase health and shield bonuses by 10%; increase power recharge bonus by 20%

Rank 4a—Recharge Speed: Increase recharge speed by 40%

Rank 4b—Health and Shields: Increase health and shields bonuses by 20%

Rank 5a—Weapon Damage: Increase weapon damage by 20%

Rank 5b—Tech Upgrade: Increase Tech power damage and duration by 30%

Rank 6a—Squad Bonus: Increase recharge speed of squadmate's tech powers by 10%

Rank 6b—Drone Specialist: Increase recharge speed of drone powers by 50%

Ranks 1 through 3 Analysis

Quarian Machinist is a great Tech passive power capable of making Tali tougher defensively and offensively.

At Ranks 1 through 3, she will have a health and shield increase of 30 percent and a power recharge speed bonus of 60 percent, making her tougher to damage and more dangerous when using powers.

Rank 4 Analysis

At Rank 4a, you can increase Tali's power recharge speed. This is especially useful if you want to make her an efficient power damage dealer or if you want her to use drones often while in battle.

By selecting Rank 6a, you'll increase her power recharge speed to 100 percent, making it a difficult upgrade choice to pass up.

Your other choice is to bolster her health and shields (Rank 6b). Select this option if you want to make her a tougher squadmate.

Rank 5 Analysis

Both Rank 5 upgrades will decide whether Tali will become a weapon specialist (Rank 5a) or will rely on Tech powers like drones (Rank 6b).

If you plan on making Tali a drone specialist, select Rank 5b. This will make your drones extra effective in combat.

Rank 6a, while useful when using shotguns, is a straightforward weapon damage upgrade.

Rank 6 Analysis

Base your decision for the final upgrade on whether you want Tali to rely on her drones primarily. The Drone Specialist upgrade (Rank 6b) will increase the recharge speed of your drone powers by 50 percent.

So if you've upgraded both drone powers to at least Rank 2, then each power will recharge in less than 5 seconds.

And since each drone power will last over 10 seconds, this makes for great potential drone usage on the battlefield.

The alternative (Rank 6a) grants your squad a recharge speed increase to their Tech powers. Select this if you use crew members like EDI frequently.

BUILD OPTIONS

TECH CROWD CONTROL

Energy Drain: 4b, 5a

Sabotage: 4a, 6a

Combat Drone: 5a, 6b

Defense Drone: 4b, 5a, 6a

Quarian Machinist: 6b

Many of Tali's powers are designed to stun, slow, or otherwise disrupt enemies.

While this may not inflict as much damage on foes as fully maxed-out damage upgrades, it will allow the rest of your squad to execute important tactical maneuvers or overwhelm affected foes with attacks.

Use powers like Energy Drain to weaken rivals, Sabotage to turn them into allies, and drones to stun or direct foes where you want them to go.

Some enemies can even be distracted enough to give you their back, making them most vulnerable to attack.

DRONE/DAMAGE SPECIALIST

Energy Drain: 4a, 5a, 6a

Sabotage: 5a, 6a

Combat Drone: 4b, 5b, 6a

Defense Drone: 4b, 5b, 6b

Quarian Machinist: 5a, 6b

If you want to make the most use out of Tali's two drone abilities, select Quarian Machinist's drone-specific upgrade, Drone Specialist.

It will increase both drone powers' recharge speed, making them more easily deployable in battle.

For Defense Drone, take every opportunity to increase its range and power, then select Chain Lightning. Combat Drone, however, will be Tali's go-to power.

Give it both additional bonus powers—Detonate and Rockets—and Tali will be able to maximize drone damage in any situation.

ROMANCE

If a male Shepard romanced Tali in *Mass Effect 2* , he has the option to continue the relationship.

KEY CONVERSATIONS

Tali has a personal moment with Shepard upon first boarding the Normandy with the rest of the quarian delegation.

In that conversation, Shepard can make it clear that he still has feelings for her.

Doing so does not lock Shepard into a relationship (and is not required to continue the relationship), but it does lead to more intimate dialogue between Shepard and Tali during the mission on the geth Dreadnought, "Priority: Rannoch."

KEY MOMENT

Tali asks Shepard to call her up to the cabin sometime during the war against the geth.

When Shepard does, she talks about her fears for her people, then asks Shepard whether he wants to continue the relationship, giving Shepard the chance to commit.

This conversation is only available before Shepard goes down to Rannoch to destroy the Reaper base.

If Shepard does not call her up to the cabin before then, he loses the chance to continue his relationship with her.

OTHER CONVERSATIONS

During the geth campaign, Shepard can find Tali on the Citadel arguing with a turian diplomat. Take one side or the other to help settle the dispute.

After the campaign is over, Shepard can find Tali working in a diplomatic capacity to coordinate the quarian fleet's efforts to help other races.

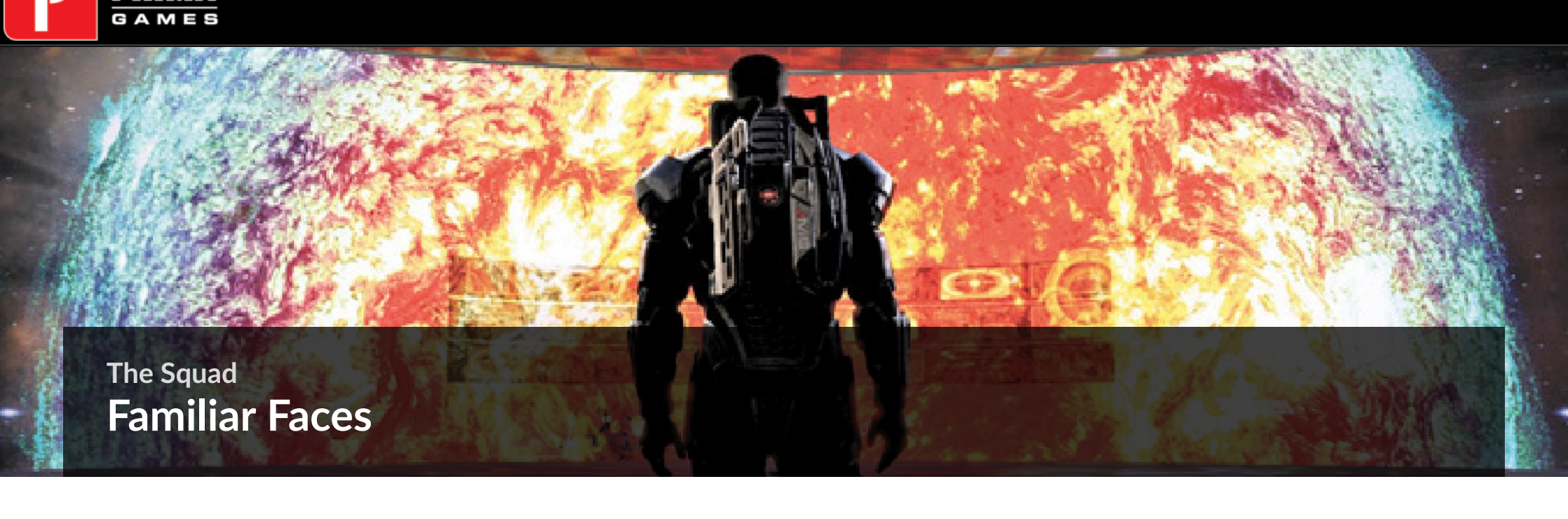
If you go to the Normandy lounge after completing the mission on Sanctuary, you will find a very drunk Tali either mourning Miranda or celebrating her victory over her father.

At other points after the geth campaign, Shepard can find Tali in Engineering, either talking over the radio to Garrus and other old friends or bantering with the Normandy engineers.

While none of this is critical, it gives a nice small look into Tali's daily life.

If you do engage her in a relationship, Tali has unique dialogue options during the final mission on Rannoch.

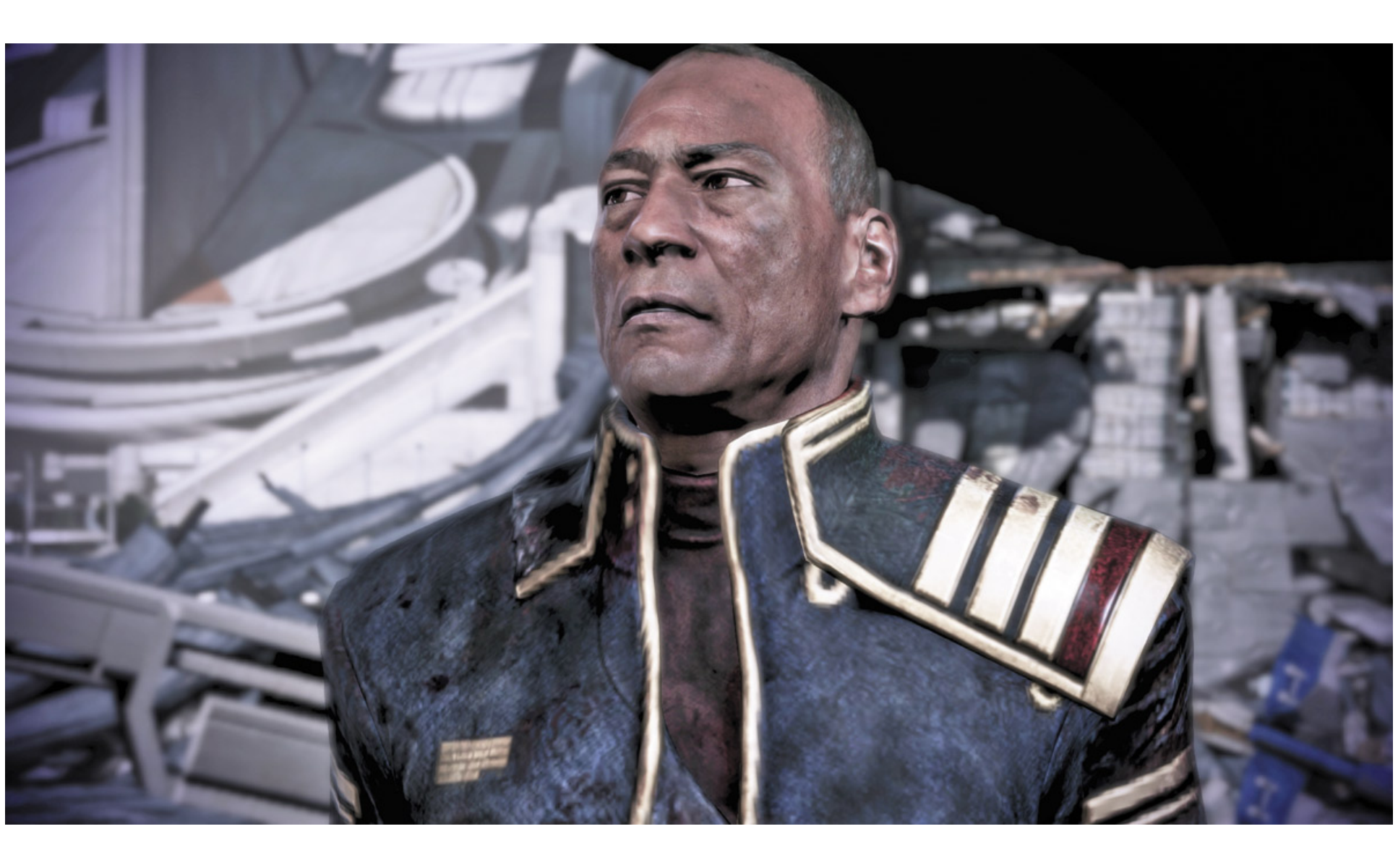
After completing the missions on Rannoch, Shepard can talk to Tali in Engineering and she will give Shepard a token of her love: a picture of her with her mask off, which Shepard can look at in his cabin.



The Squad

Familiar Faces

ADMIRAL ANDERSON



Admiral David Edward Anderson is a career military officer in the Systems Alliance Navy. Born in London in 2137, he later moved to Arcturus Station and became the first graduate of the Alliance's now-renowned N7 marine program.

Anderson is one of the Alliance's most decorated Special Forces operatives and served with honor during the First Contact War.

He was the original captain of the SSV Normandy before relinquishing command to his XO, Commander Shepard.

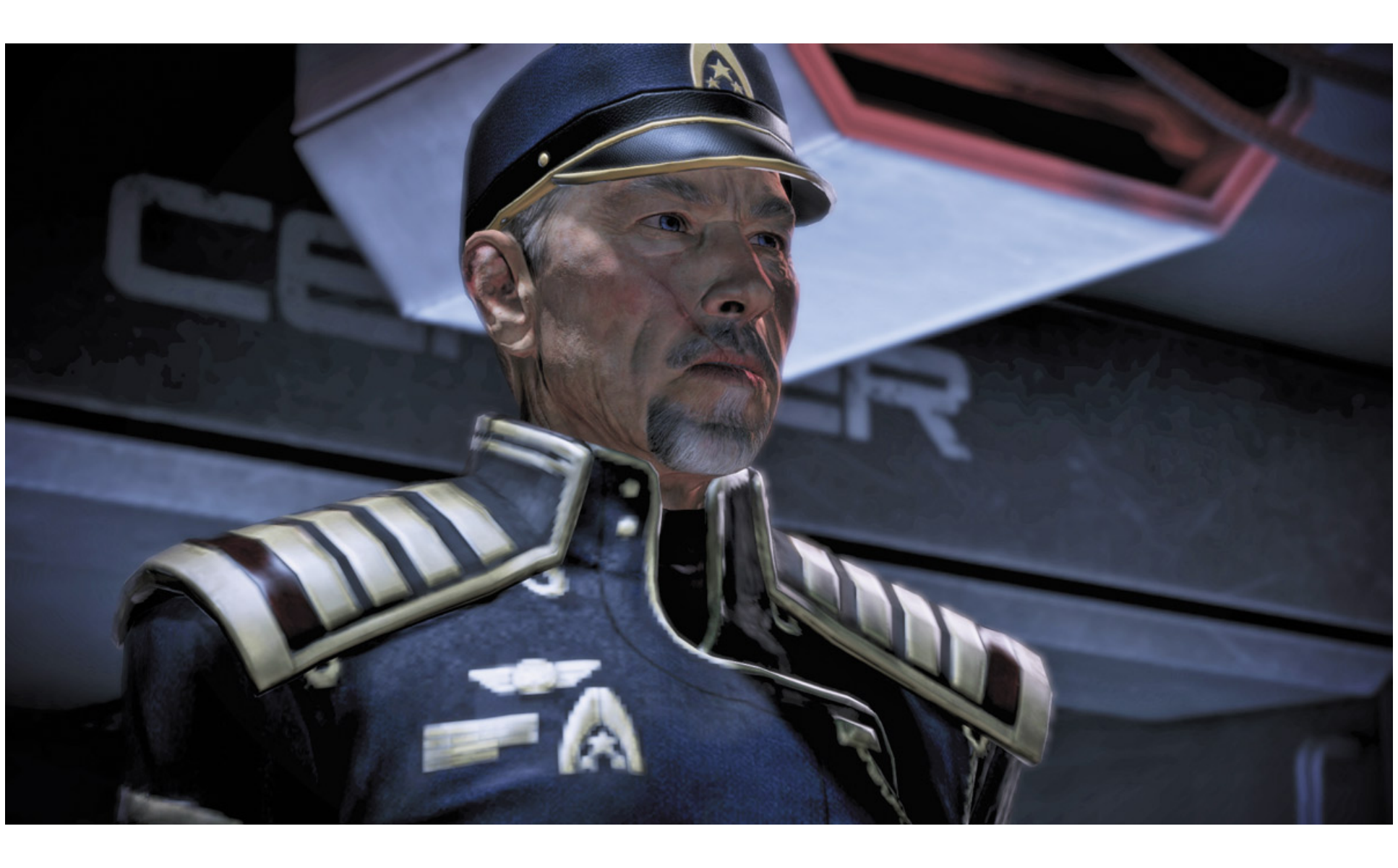
After the Alliance victory in the Battle of the Citadel, Anderson was promoted to Admiral and chosen to advise Citadel Councilor Donnel Udina on military matters.

Anderson later became embroiled in a Cerberus plot to abduct his friend Kahlee Sanders, but he foiled the abduction and returned to duty to prepare for the Reaper invasion.

ROMANCE

Admiral Anderson is not a romance option for either male or female Shepard.

ADMIRAL HACKETT



Admiral Steven Hackett is a decorated officer in the Systems Alliance, currently assigned to Arcturus Station on the far side of the Sol Relay.

In the battle for the Citadel, Admiral Hackett commanded the Fifth Fleet. Following that victory, he was promoted to head of the Alliance military. Hackett was born to a single mother in Buenos Aires in 2134.

When his mother died in the pandemic of 2146, he was placed in the Advanced Training Academy for Juveniles, where his superior talents in science and leadership quickly became evident.

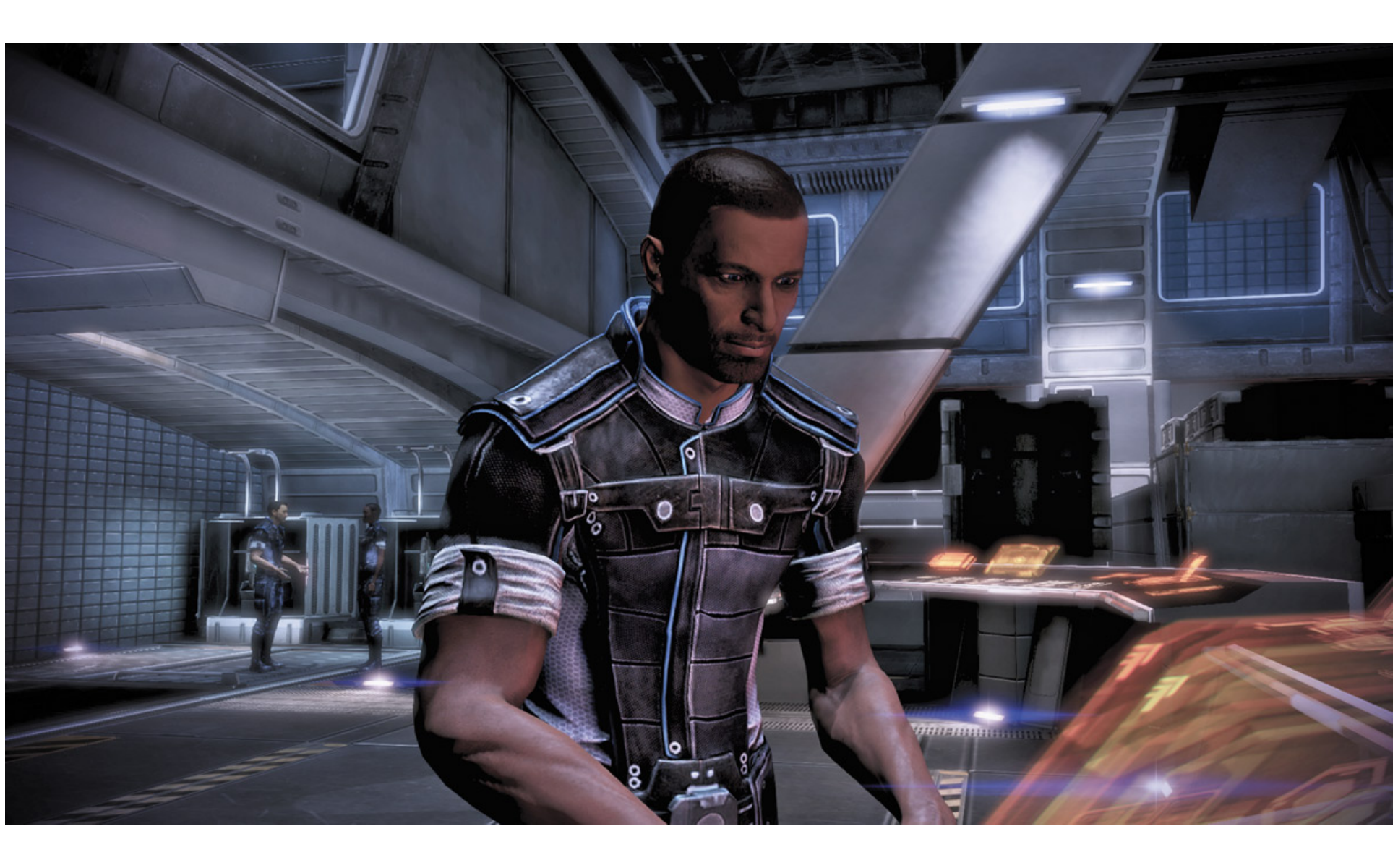
Hackett enlisted in 2152, volunteering for high-risk missions to colonize space beyond the Sol Relay.

He was commissioned as a second lieutenant on Arcturus Station in 2156 and soon proved his ability in the First Contact War.His rare ascent from enlisted man to admiral remains an Alliance legend.

ROMANCE

Admiral Hackett is not a romance option for either male or female Shepard.

LIEUTENANT CORTEZ



Lieutenant Cortez, the Normandy's shuttle pilot, is a humble Alliance Officer. Having survived the attack on Earth, he's no stranger to loss.

Even though he is dealing with the loss of his husband, Lieutenant Cortez still maintains a steady grip on the shuttle controls.

He's a skilled pilot, capable of getting Shepard and the squad into any and all missions and more heavily defended landing zones.

While behind the shuttle controls, he's all business and able to maintain a level of professionalism befitting the *Normandy* 's crew. Back on the ship, he can relax a bit and let people get to know a more personal side to him.

ROMANCE

Cortez is a romance option for male Shepard. He is present for the entirety of the game but is strictly professional on missions.

To form a more personal relationship, visit him in his station on the Normandy cargo deck.

KEY CONVERSATIONS

In early conversations on the *Normandy* , Cortez shows that he's handling his professional duties well but is hurting emotionally.

At one point, Shepard can suggest that Cortez should take some time off and go to the Citadel. Doing so enables his later content.

On the Citadel, Cortez is initially in the docking bay, watching ships go by. Later, Shepard can find him down in the refugee camp.

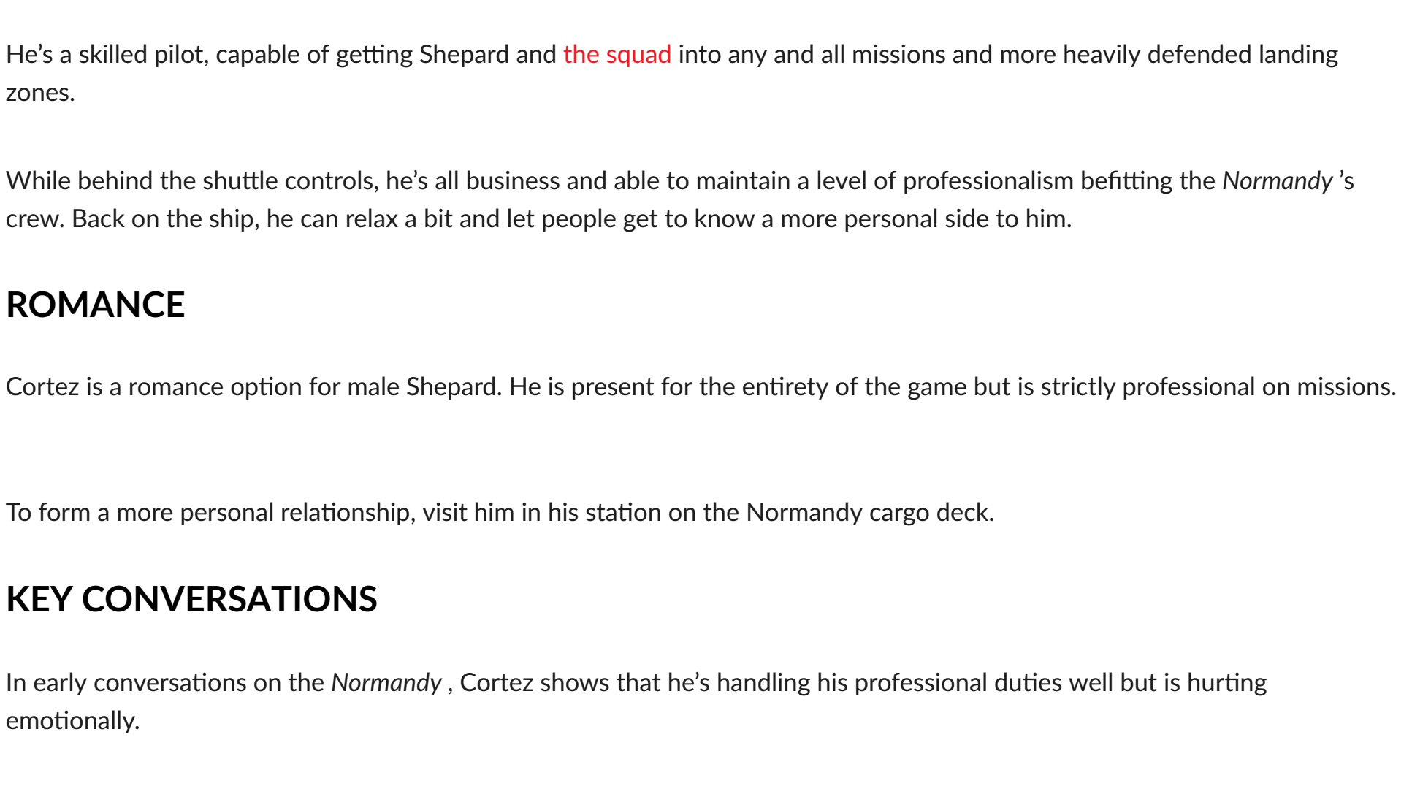
KEY MOMENT

Once Shepard has encountered the first two Citadel moments with Cortez, Cortez e-mails Shepard and asks him to come to Purgatory.

Shepard finds Cortez there, determined to celebrate and live life while he can. Shepard can choose to bring up the possibility of a relationship and commit to Cortez here.

During the final assault on Earth, Cortez's shuttle is shot down; if Shepard is romancing Cortez (or helped Cortez deal with his grief without a romance), Cortez's hope and will to live help him survive the crash and he has a final radio conversation with Shepard.

DR. CHAKWAS



Dr. Karin Chakwas is a trauma surgeon and a major in the Alliance Navy.

She served on the *SSV Normandy* under both Captain Anderson and Commander Shepard and was aboard the ship when it was destroyed by the Collectors. She later quit the Alliance in order to rejoin Shepard on the Cerberus-built *Normandy SR-2* .

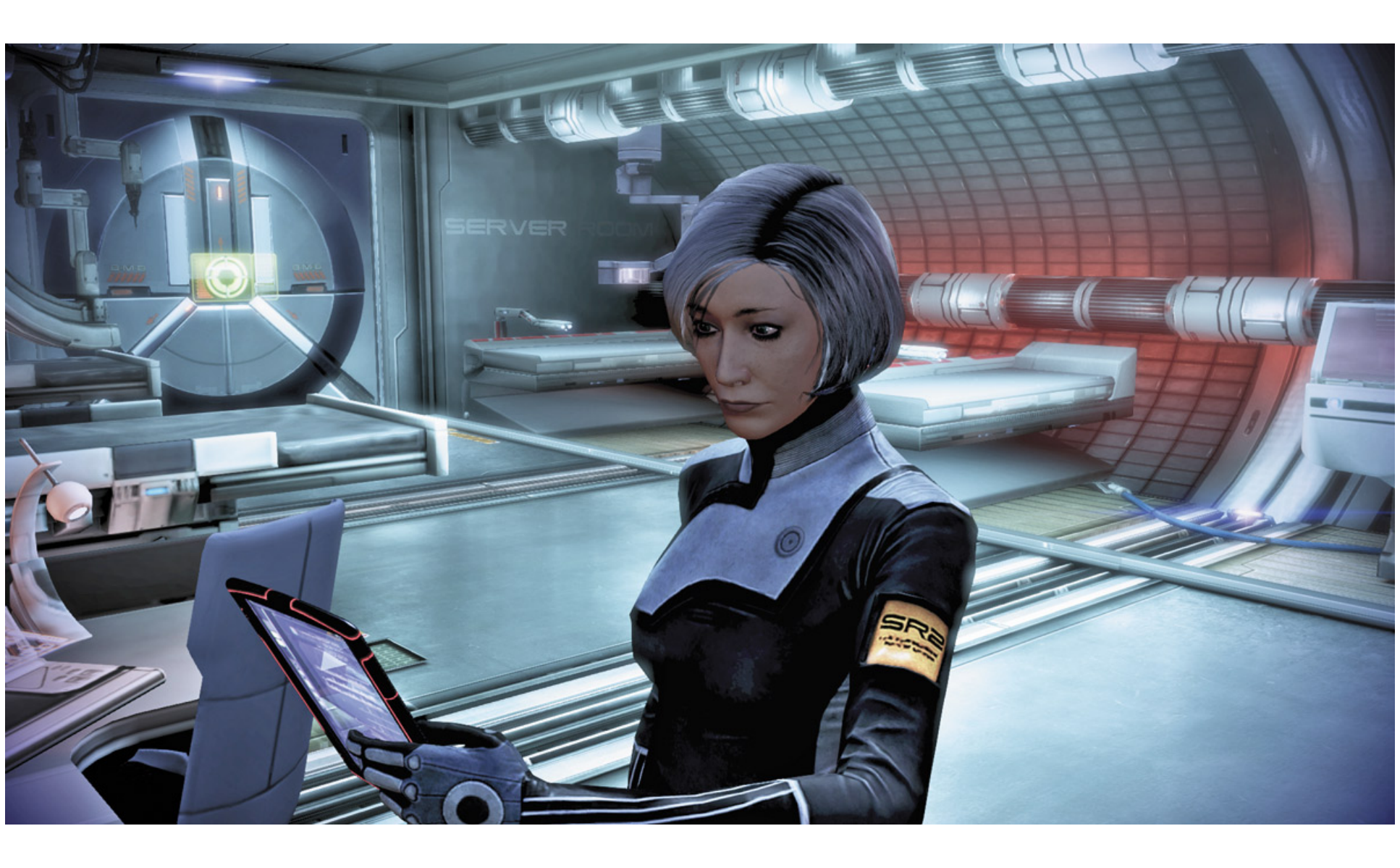
Along with most of the second *Normandy* 's crew, Dr. Chakwas was kidnapped by the Collectors and taken beyond the Omega 4 relay, where Commander Shepard eventually rescued her.

After the Alliance impounded the *Normandy SR - 2* , an inquiry found that Dr. Chakwas had "no significant role in or provable knowledge" of Cerberus's criminal activities. She has since rejoined the Alliance.

ROMANCE

Dr. Chakwas is not a romance option for either male of female Shepard. However, you can have a night of drinks with her just before the final mission.

JOKER



Flight Lieutenant Jeff "Joker" Moreau is a respected pilot with the Alliance Navy. Born and raised on Arcturus Station, he is widely considered to be the best helmsman in the Systems Alliance.

Moreau enlisted with the navy directly out of school and quickly gained the respect of his superiors.

He served as pilot of both the *Normandy* SR-1 and its successor, the SR-2, and he was at their respective helms during the Battle of the Citadel and the assault on the Collectors.

Moreau suffers from Vrolik syndrome, a rare, debilitating disorder also known as brittle bone disease.

ROMANCE

Joker is not a romance option for either male of female Shepard. He can, however, engage in a relationship with EDI if Shepard councils both parties to do so.

CONVERSATIONS

Joker will say something unique after every major mission in the game.

If Shepard approaches but does not immediately initiate conversation, Joker may launch into a discussion with someone else (EDI, if she is nearby, or someone else over the radio).

He reacts to the arrival or death of former squadmates as well.

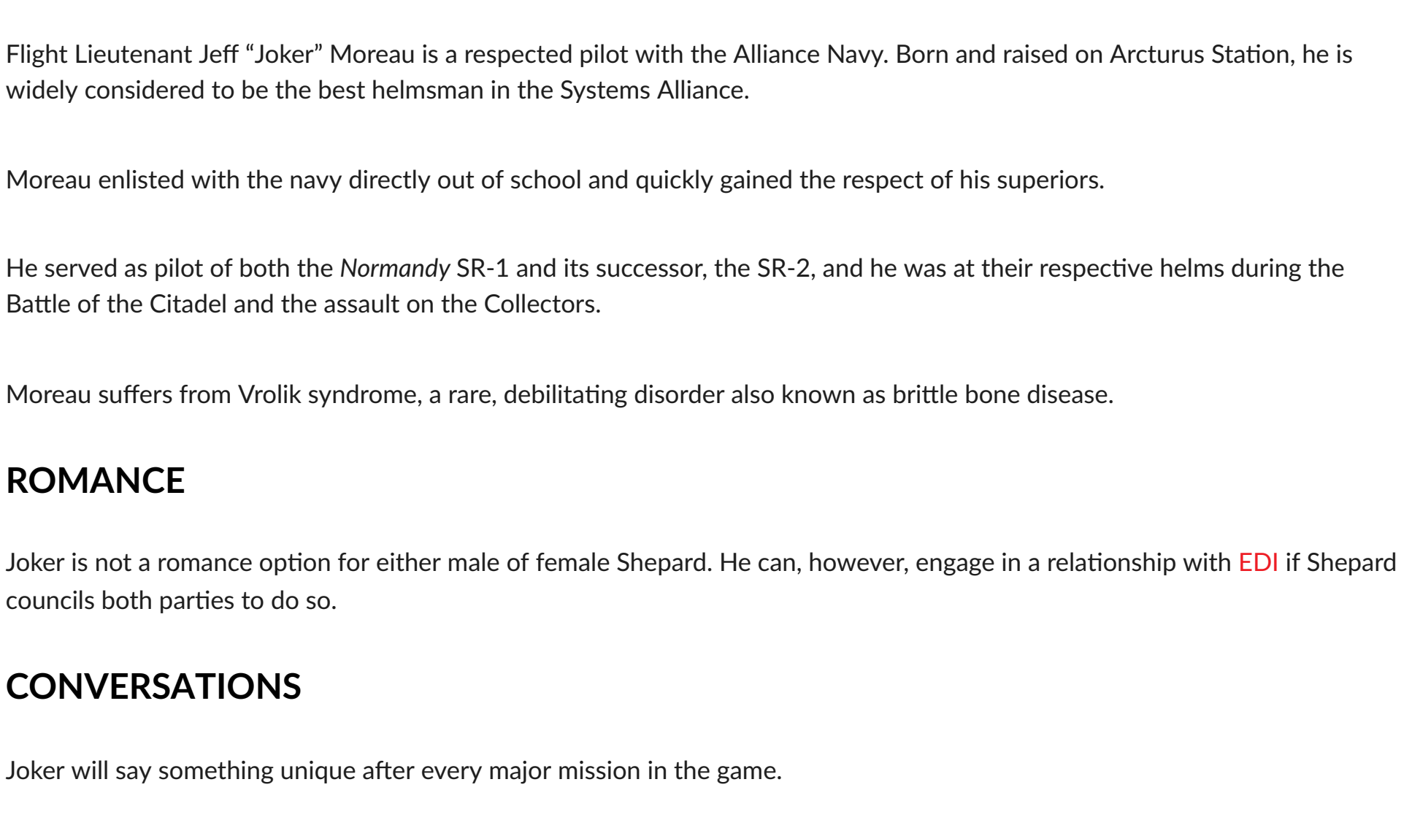
To hear everything he has to say, make sure to talk to him after major missions (like the end of the genophage campaign, or the Citadel coup, or after the end of the Geth/Quarian War) or after major plot events (like EDI's introduction).

After Thessia, Joker will make an inappropriate comment that starts a more emotional scene.

When the second dialogue choice comes up, choosing the Renegade option will shut Joker down until the end of the game, with Shepard telling Joker in no uncertain terms to stop his inappropriate comments.

On the Citadel, Joker is present on the Presidium Commons with EDI early in the game. After the Citadel coup, he can be found in Purgatory, watching people dance away their cares.

MIRANDA LAWSON



Miranda Lawson is a high-ranking former Cerberus operative and a human biotic.

Lawson headed Project Lazarus, the Cerberus operation that brought Commander Shepard back from the brink of death after the first Normandy was destroyed.

Lawson is an example of the achievements possible through genetic engineering. She was created in 2150 through manipulation of her father's DNA.

Her entire physical and mental composition was deliberately engineered, including a longer life span and a superior immune system.

Lawson accompanied Commander Shepard on the maiden voyage of the *Normandy* SR-2 and was part of the crew responsible for the defeat of the Collectors.

She has since left Cerberus. Her current whereabouts are unknown.

ROMANCE

Miranda was a romance option for male Shepard in *Mass Effect 2* , and if Shepard romanced her, he has the option to continue the relationship.

She cannot join Shepard's squad, however, so while committing to her does preclude other romances, this long distance relationship can be lonely and may not feel as rewarding as others.

Previously in *Mass Effect*

If you're playing *Mass Effect* for the first time, then it is assumed that Miranda survived the suicide mission during *Mass Effect* 2.

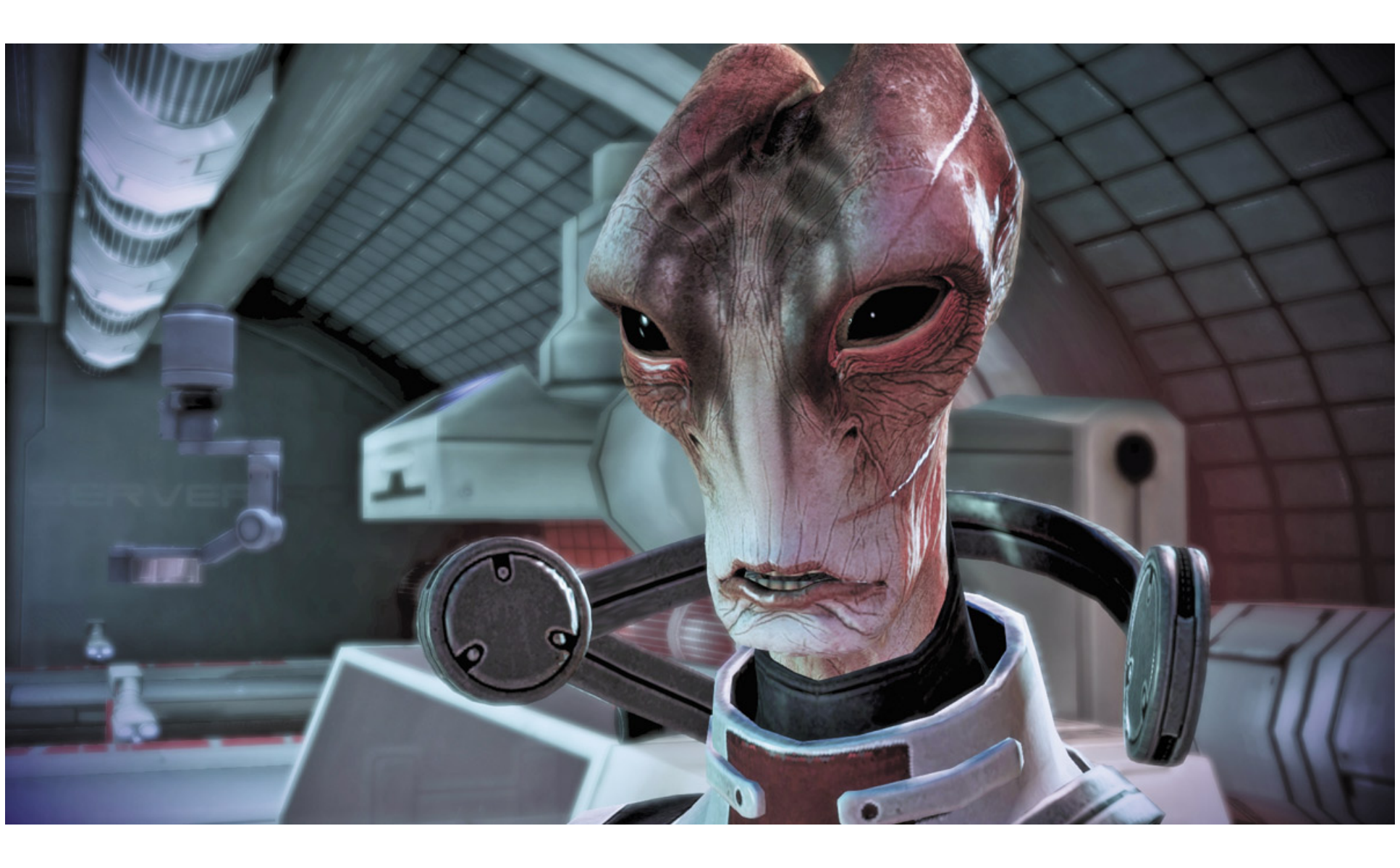
She meets Shepard several times on the Citadel, and Shepard meets her again while investigating the Sanctuary facility on Horizon.

Players who import a *Mass Effect 2* game save where Miranda is not present will find that there is no full replacement for Miranda, in which case nobody talks to Shepard on the Citadel in her place.

At Sanctuary, video messages that would have come from Miranda instead come from Oriana, Miranda's sister. The final confrontation between Shepard and Miranda's father does not have Miranda there to save her sister.

If Shepard commits to a relationship with Miranda and warns her about Kai Leng, it increases Miranda's chances of surviving the Horizon mission. If not, she dies in Shepard's arms.

MORDIN SOLUS



Dr. Mordin Solus is a master geneticist and former operative for the salarian Special Tasks Group. Dr. Solus is well known for his work in perpetuating the genophage, a biological weapon that almost completely sterilized the krogan species.

He eventually left the STG to open a clinic on Omega, where his combat skills kept the clinic safe and operational amid Omega's lawless society.

In 2185, Commander Shepard recruited Dr. Solus to research the Collectors and the Reapers. He was a member of the Normandy crew that traveled beyond the Omega 4 relay to attack the Collectors.

He survived the mission, but his current whereabouts are unknown.

ROMANCE

Mordin is not a romance option for either male or female Shepard.

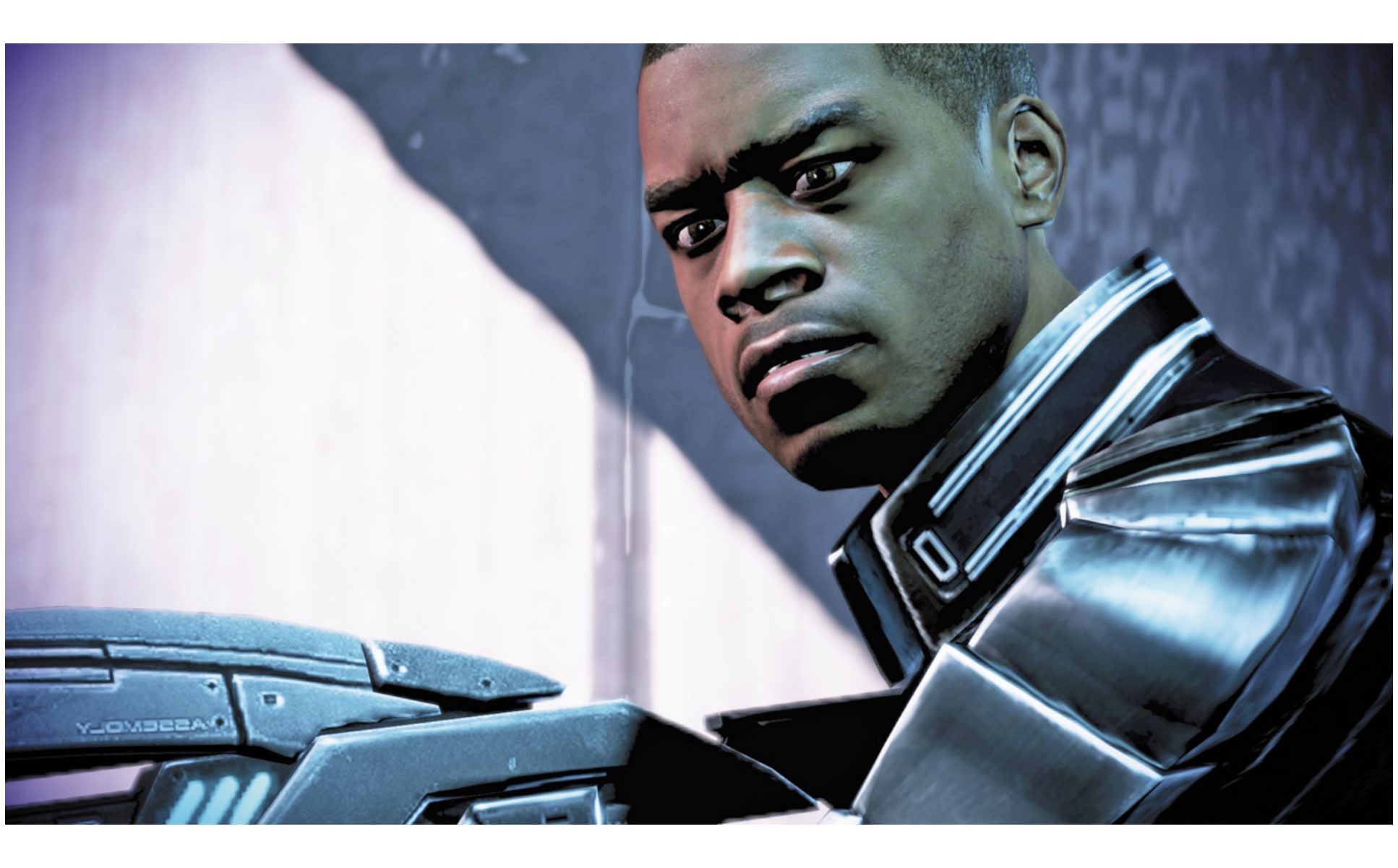
Previously in *Mass Effect*

If you're playing Mass Effect for the first time, then it is assumed Mordin is alive, having joined Shepard during Mass Effect 2 and survived the suicide mission.

He escorts Eve to safety during the Sur'kesh mission, stays with Eve in the med bay on the Normandy, and escorts Eve to the Shroud tower on Tuchanka. He sacrifices himself to override the sabotage (unless stopped by Shepard).

Players who import a *Mass Effect 2* game save where Solus is dead will find that the salarian scientist Padok Wiks takes over most of Mordin's roles during the Genophage Campaign.

JACOB TAYLOR



Jacob Taylor is a human biotic and was once a Cerberus operative working under Miranda Lawson. Born in 2157, he began his career as a Systems Alliance marine and served as a member of the Corsairs, an arms-length program for operatives working outside of Alliance jurisdiction.

Taylor survived the geth attack on Eden Prime but left the Alliance afterward because of what he perceived as unresponsiveness in the face of aggression.

While working for Cerberus, Taylor thwarted a plot by batarian terrorists to unleash a bioweapon on the Citadel. Soon after, he was assigned to Project Lazarus, the Cerberus effort to reconstruct Commander Shepard and the Normandy stealth frigate.

Following the project's completion, Taylor accompanied Shepard through the Omega-4 relay to destroy the Collectors.

He survived that mission and has since left Cerberus, although his current whereabouts and affiliations are unknown.

ROMANCE

If female Shepard romanced Jacob Taylor in *Mass Effect 2* , she can talk about how their relationship ended but does not have the option to continue it.

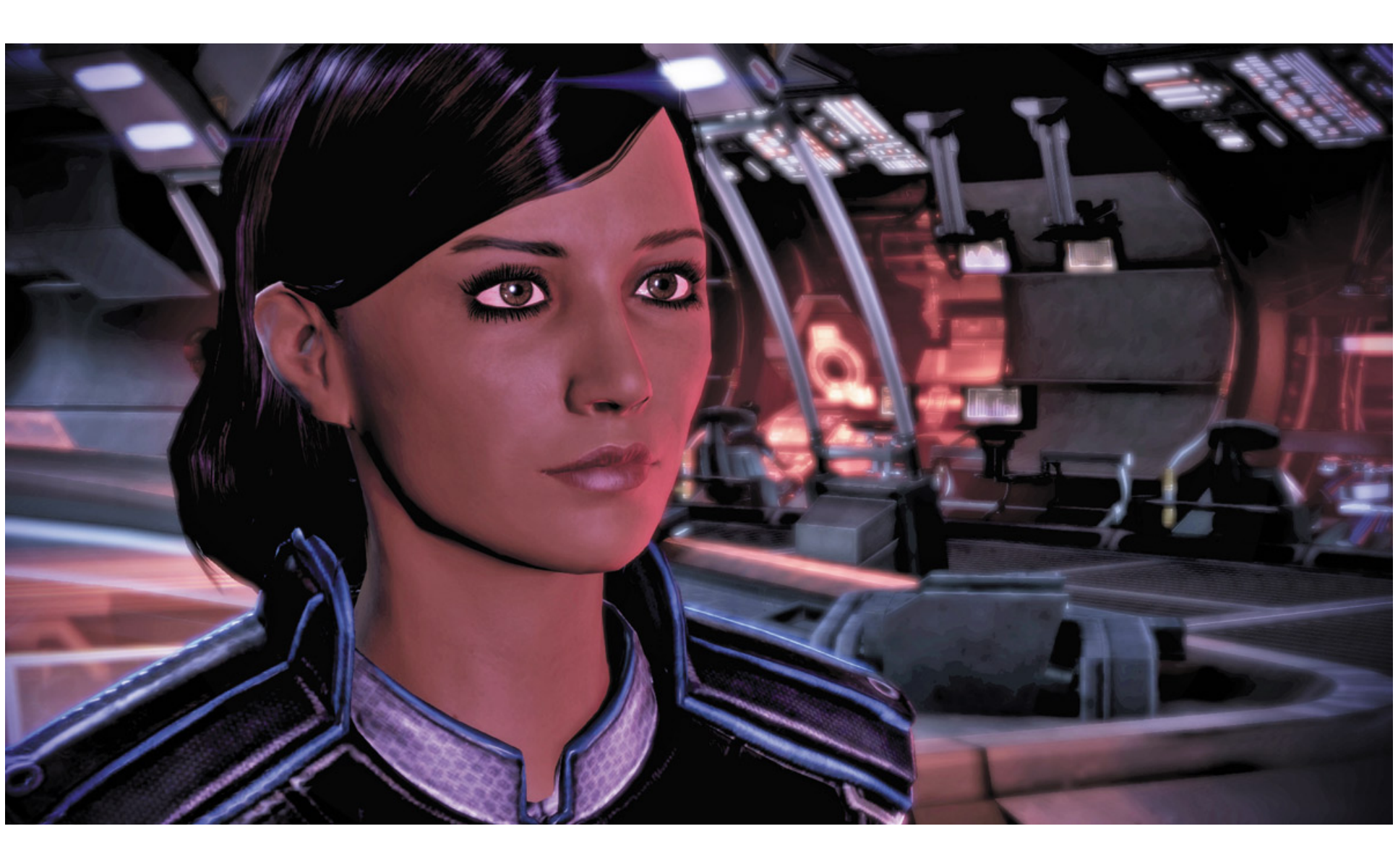
Jacob has moved on to someone else, although he remains friendly to Shepard and grateful for the time they had together.

Previously in *Mass Effect*

If you're playing *Mass Effect* for the first time, then it is assumed that Jacob survived the suicide mission in *Mass Effect 2* and assists Shepard with rescuing Dr. Brynn Cole and her enclave of former Cerberus scientists trying to defect.

Players who import a *Mass Effect 2* game save where Jacob is not alive will find that, without Jacob's calm and steady influence, they must work harder to gain the trust of Dr. Cole.

SPECIALIST TRAYNOR



Specialist Samantha Traynor is the *Normandy* 's new communication officer. She's in charge of letting Commander Shepard know about key communications, be they radio transmissions she expertly picked up or Shepard's personal e-mail.

At times, Specialist Traynor may even be able to let Shepard know the mood of specific crewmates, keying Shepard in to important conversations.

In her personal life she's a fun, playful character with a fondness for games and expensive dental hygienic equipment.

Despite her quirkiness, or perhaps because of it, she's a great personality aboard the *Normandy* with many surprises.

ROMANCE

Traynor is a romance option for female Shepard. She is present for the entirety of the game and never leaves her station near the galaxy map.

KEY CONVERSATIONS

Traynor provides an early introduction to the *Normandy* and opens up the mission at Grissom Academy and the chance to rescue the Cerberus defectors.

She also has personal talks in which she discusses the difference between working in a lab and working on a frontline warship.

If romancing Traynor, make sure to speak with her before the final mission. Unlike most other major romances, there is no option to speak with Traynor on Earth, and the talk on the Normandy is the last time Shepard sees her.

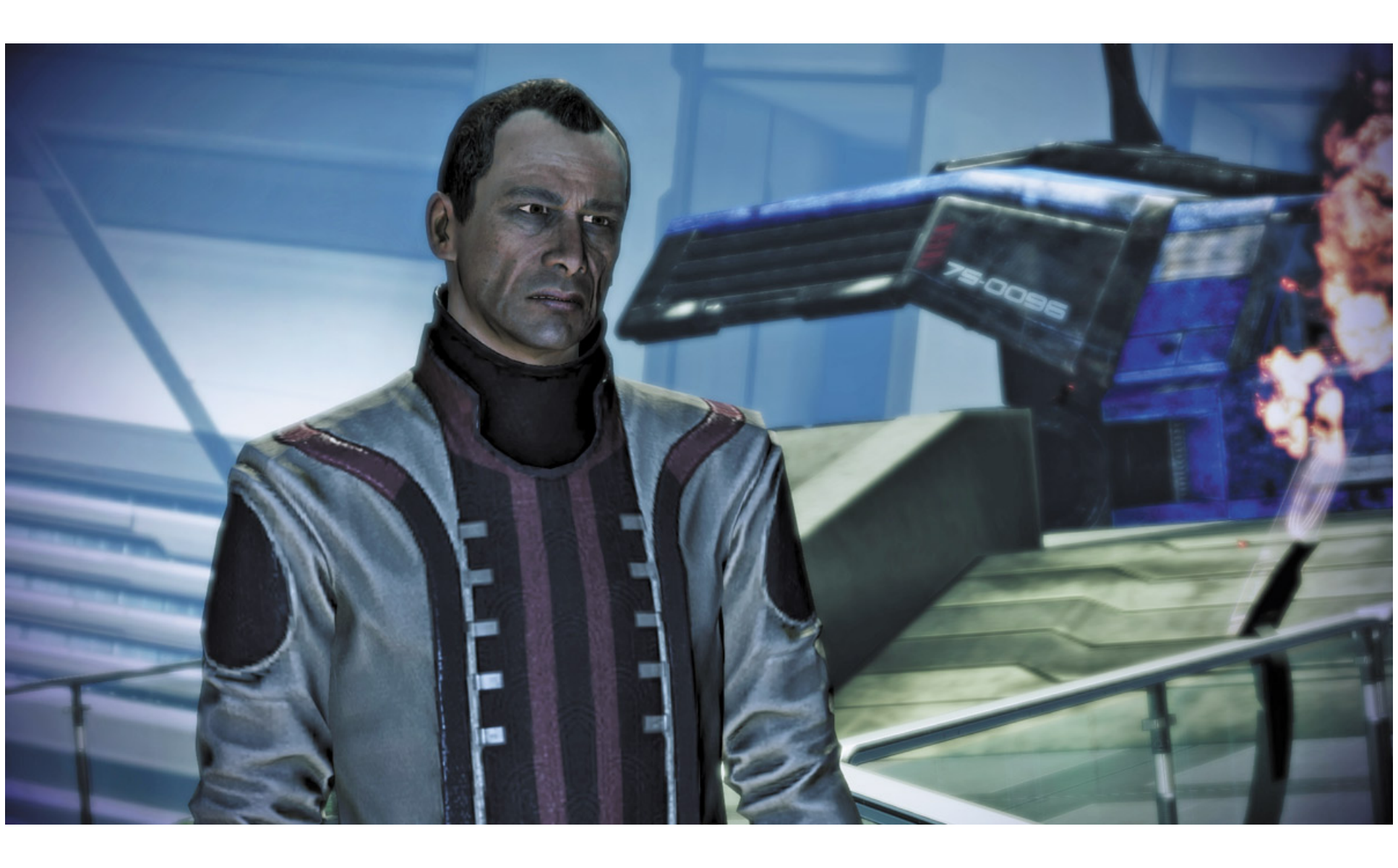
KEY MOMENT

Once Shepard has had the ambient conversation about Traynor liking to play chess, Traynor will send an e-mail offering to come up to Shepard's cabin.

She brings a chessboard and is prepared to play but makes an offhand comment about being jealous of Shepard's shower. If Shepard's intimacy is high enough, she can offer to let Traynor use the shower.

Traynor makes it clear that she's interested in a serious relationship, not just a fling, and Shepard can commit to the relationship by joining Traynor.

COUNCILOR UDINA



Donnel Udina is the lone human on the Citadel Council. Although he has a keen ability for furthering his own political career, Udina has long promoted humanity's interests first and foremost in the galactic arena.

When humanity won a position on the Council for its part in defending the Citadel, the Alliance chose Udina for the position. He holds the office to this day.

Despite his unwavering focus on human interests, Councilor Udina is usually willing to collaborate with other species. Even his opponents concede that Udina gives fair consideration to nonhuman proposals, so long as humanity also benefits.

ROMANCE

Councilor Udina is not a romance option for either male of female Shepard.

NOTE

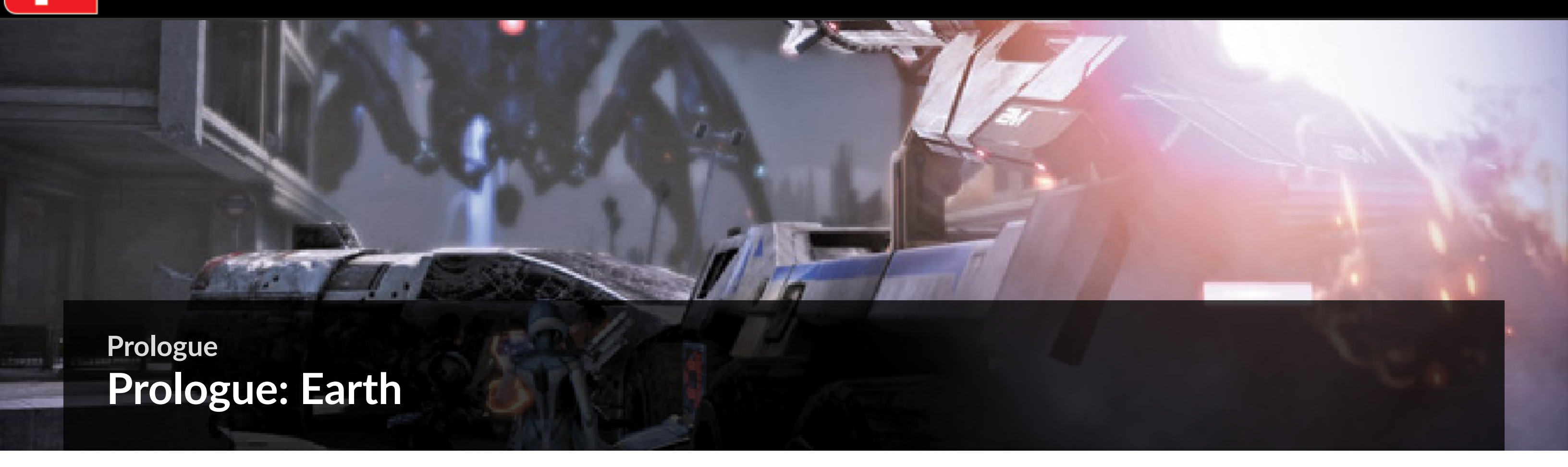
The following characters may or may not show up, depending on your imported save:

- Jack
- Samara
- Thane
- Legion
- Wrex
- Wreav
- Grunt
- Padok Wiks

As we mentioned in the "Importing Saves" section in this chapter, the game takes into account your previous choices across *Mass Effect 1 and 2* .

However, new players who do not import a save (starting a fresh game) should refer to the "Importing Saves" section to see what the "default" assumptions are of the world of *Mass Effect 3*.

It is worthwhile to note, however, that these characters are mentioned in their respective sections of the single-player campaign to point out where they would appear otherwise.



Prologue

Prologue: Earth

In 2157, humanity discovered that it was not alone in the universe. Thirty years later, they found a peaceful place among dozens of galactic species. But this idyllic future is overshadowed by a dark past: Reapers, a sentient race of machines responsible for cleansing the galaxy of all organic life every 50,000 years, are about to return.

The leaders of the galaxy are paralyzed by indecision, unable to accept the legend of the Reapers as fact. But one soldier has seen the legend come to life.

And now the fate of the galaxy depends on Shepard.

MISSION BRIEFING

When the Reapers finally reveal themselves, they do so by launching an all-out attack on Earth and the Alliance planets. This first Prologue mission serves as a tutorial on the basics of movement, combat, and exploration.

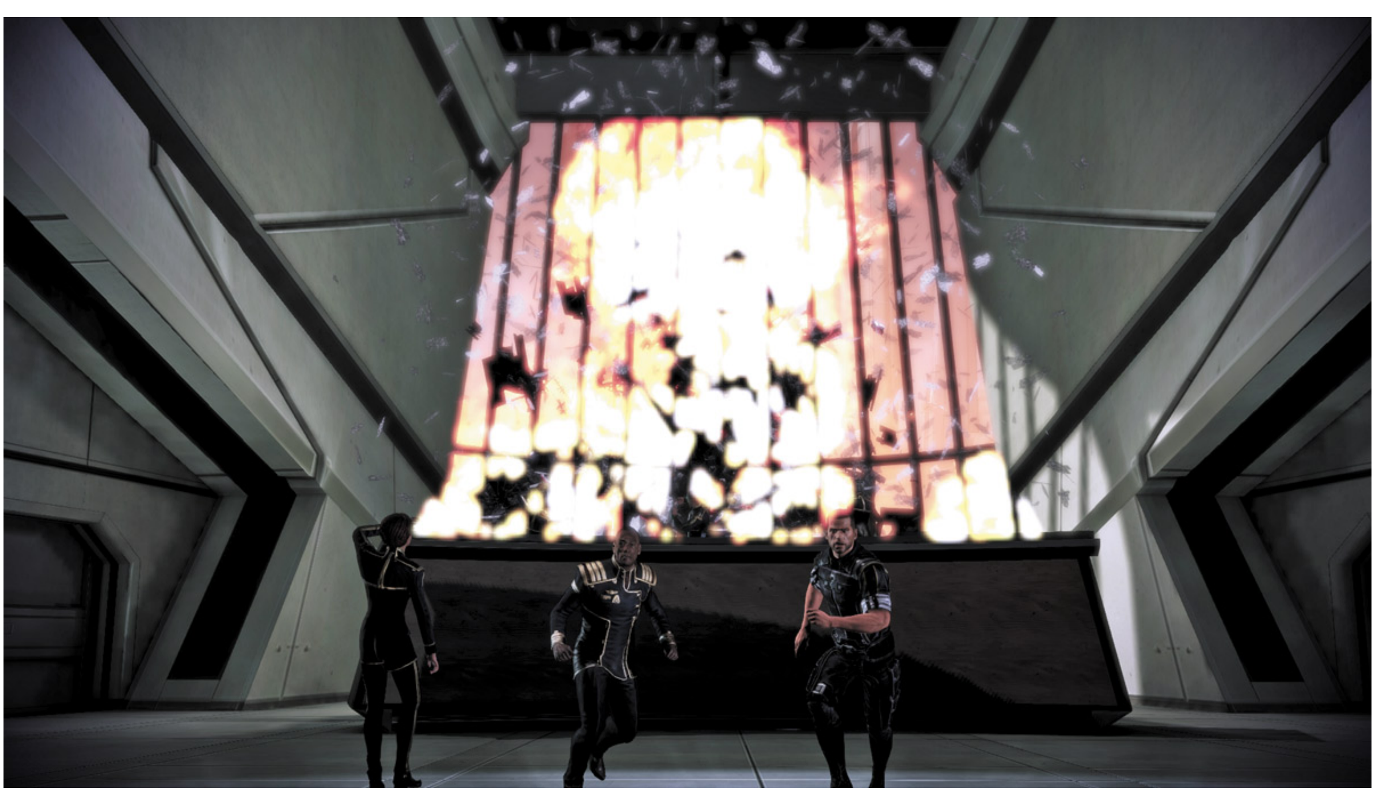
The battle will rage across several different areas, from rooftops to the lower reaches of the once-idyllic city of Vancouver. Take time to get acquainted with the controls and adjust them to suit your needs.

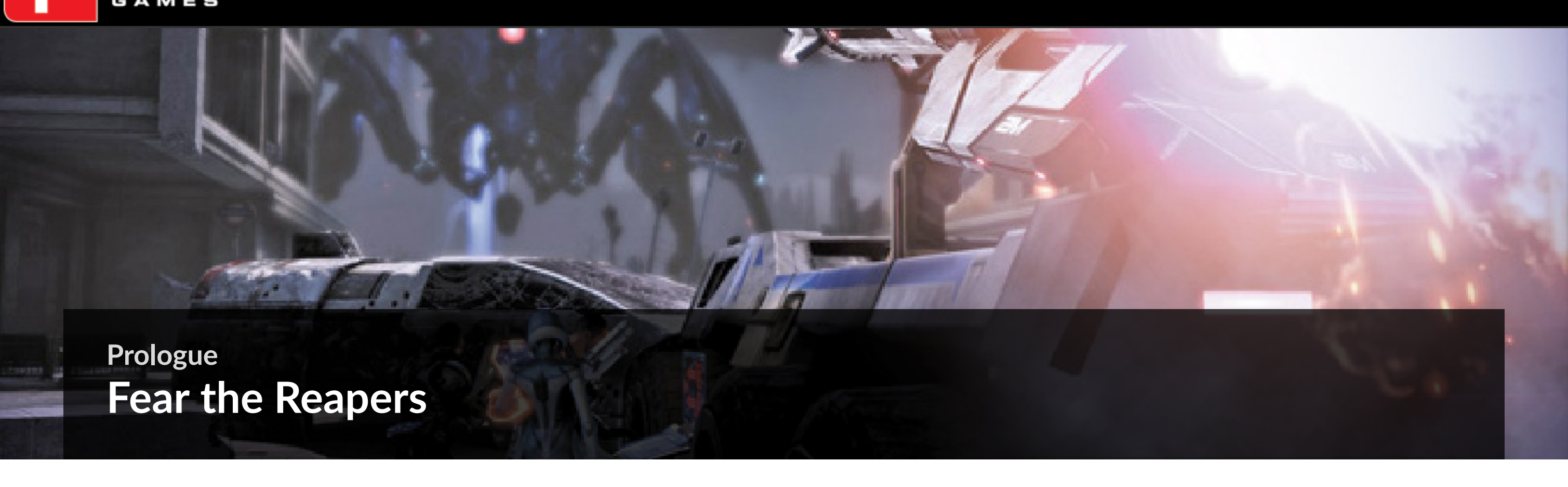
Once you've reached the lower level of the city and engage the Reaper cannibals, try out your class-specific skills to see if they're right for you. It's still early in the game, so you can simply blast through the opposition; however, this Prologue mission is a great time to begin experimenting with different military classes.

The conversation trees don't yet affect long-term events or result in Paragon/Renegade consequences, so instead use these dialogue choices to set the tone for your game.

ITEM REQUISITION RUNDOWN

M-8 Avenger	M-3 Predator





Prologue

Fear the Reapers

NOTE

For the sake of keeping this walkthrough concise and universal, the screens and events described have been taken from a playthrough using the following settings:

- Gender: Male
- Appearance: Default
- Military Class: Soldier
- Reputation: War Hero
- Origin: Earthborn
- Combat Loss: Ashley Williams

However, this guide was created using every military class and multiple combinations of settings, ranging from different Combat Loss profiles to varied difficulty settings.

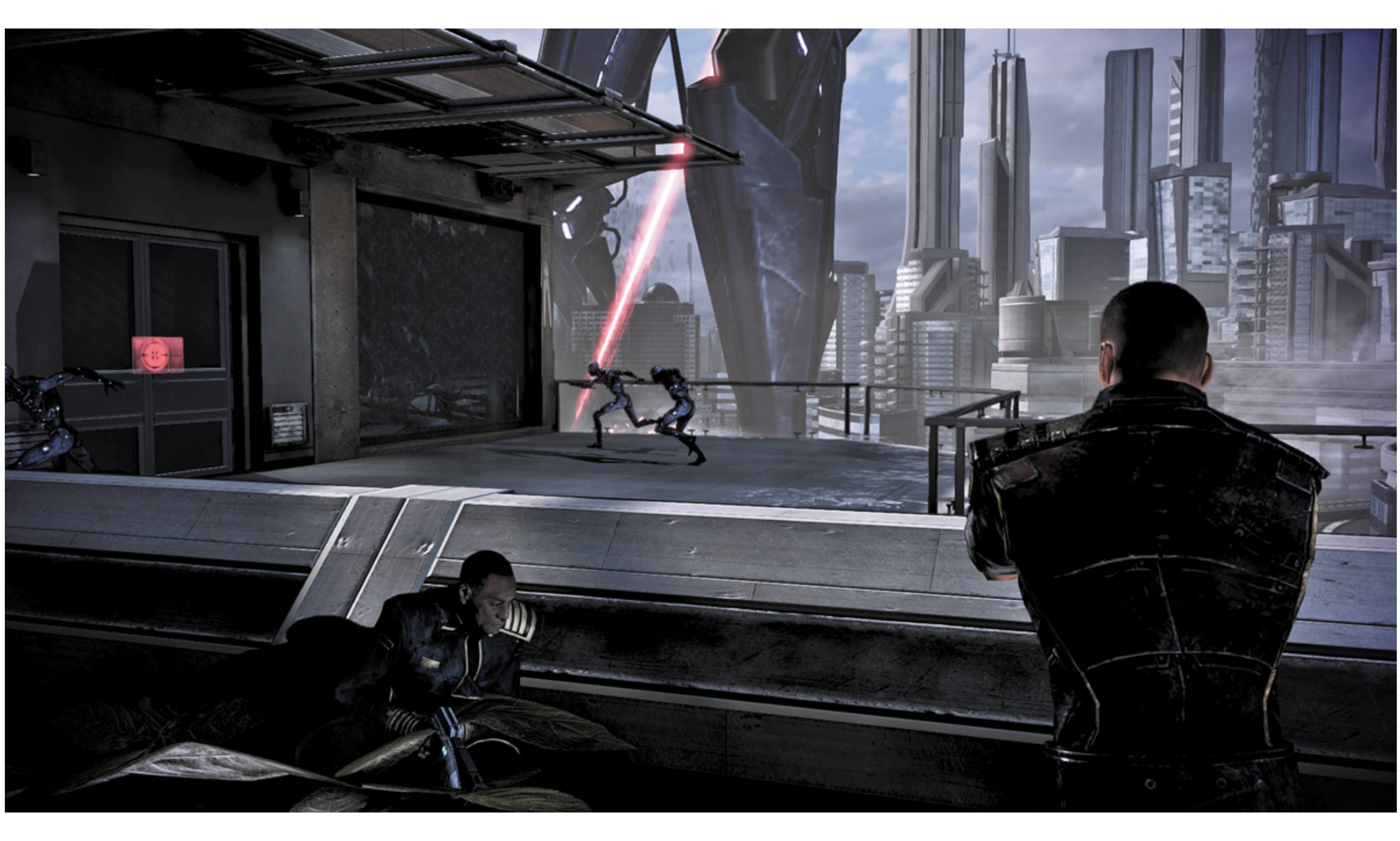
It's been nearly six months since the events of *Mass Effect 2* concluded, and Commander Shepard has fallen out of grace with the Citadel Council and the Systems Alliance.

During a time when there should be galactic peace, only Shepard and a few others are fully aware of the menacing threat that looms over nearly every planet in the Alliance.

When you take control of Shepard, quickly orient yourself and follow Admiral Anderson. The next section will usher you out of Alliance HQ and into the war-torn Vancouver cityscape.

Keep up with the admiral as he leaps across the severed beams supporting the Alliance building. Almost immediately after starting to follow Admiral Anderson, a Reaper beam will fire at the building in front of you, forcing you to jump over a small gap.

Your goal is to reach the Spaceport and escape the Reaper attack. Follow the onscreen commands and stay close to the admiral.



Shortly after climbing the ladder, hop atop the small structure and look right across the span connecting your building and the next to spot several husks. Take aim and open fire.

Pick off as many husks as you can, then drop down the ladder on the right, onto a small balcony. No sooner do your feet touch the ground than several more husks attack.

Use well-timed melee attacks to put them down. A Reaper dreadnought in the distance attacks but narrowly misses, instead blowing open the building in front of you. Venture inside.

Enter the building through the blown-open wall and pick up the **Med Kit** on the ground near the burning debris; then approach the damaged door across from you.

As you pry it open, a husk reaches through the gap and attacks. Give it a strong (charged) melee blow to knock it back, then open the door for Admiral Anderson.

Once the admiral is through, you hear a small thump nearby that catches your attention. Examine the vent in the room to discover a panicked young boy looking for refuge.

The child is too scared to follow Shepard and escapes through the ventilation shaft in a direction that Shepard cannot follow, so move on and follow Anderson deeper into the burning debris of the Alliance HQ.

Pick up the ammo on the ground, reload your weapon, and follow the admiral out the window of the next building. Follow him down the exterior of the building to the area below.

As you do, a Reaper ship destroys an Alliance dreadnought in the distance, and the resulting shock wave crumbles the structure you're on.

The tumble leaves you no worse for wear, so get up and immediately begin following Anderson again. He'll lead you across more debris, over fallen beams, and down to a team of fellow Alliance soldiers pinned by Reaper cannibals. Speak to the injured soldier, then quickly take cover behind the fallen beam on the left.

Wait for the cannibals to open fire. When they stop firing, pop out of cover and return fire. Take careful aim at their heads and pick them off one by one.

The soldier explained that he and his group barely escaped the damaged gunship. The radio was left near the gunship, so you and Anderson volunteer to go retrieve it.

Follow Anderson across the makeshift bridge and turn left. Pick up the **Med Kit** on the right, then turn right to face several more cannibals. Take cover near the small debris wall and wait for the cannibals to pop out of cover before taking them down.

This is a great area to experiment with your class abilities. If you're an Infiltrator, try using your Tactical Cloak to shift from cover to cover until you can get the drop on them. Vanguard-class players can begin to experiment with the Biotic Charge ability.

This is also a great area to begin getting accustomed to close-quarters combat. Charge strong melee strikes and knock back the enemies before taking cover and finishing them off with class-specific powers or weapons fire.

TIP

Since you're instantly pinned down by the cannibals, use the admiral during this enemy encounter. He's your only squad member at the moment, but he can easily be directed to key positions when you give the "Move" command.

Direct him to your right or left, depending on where you are located, to maximize your and the admiral's range of fire.

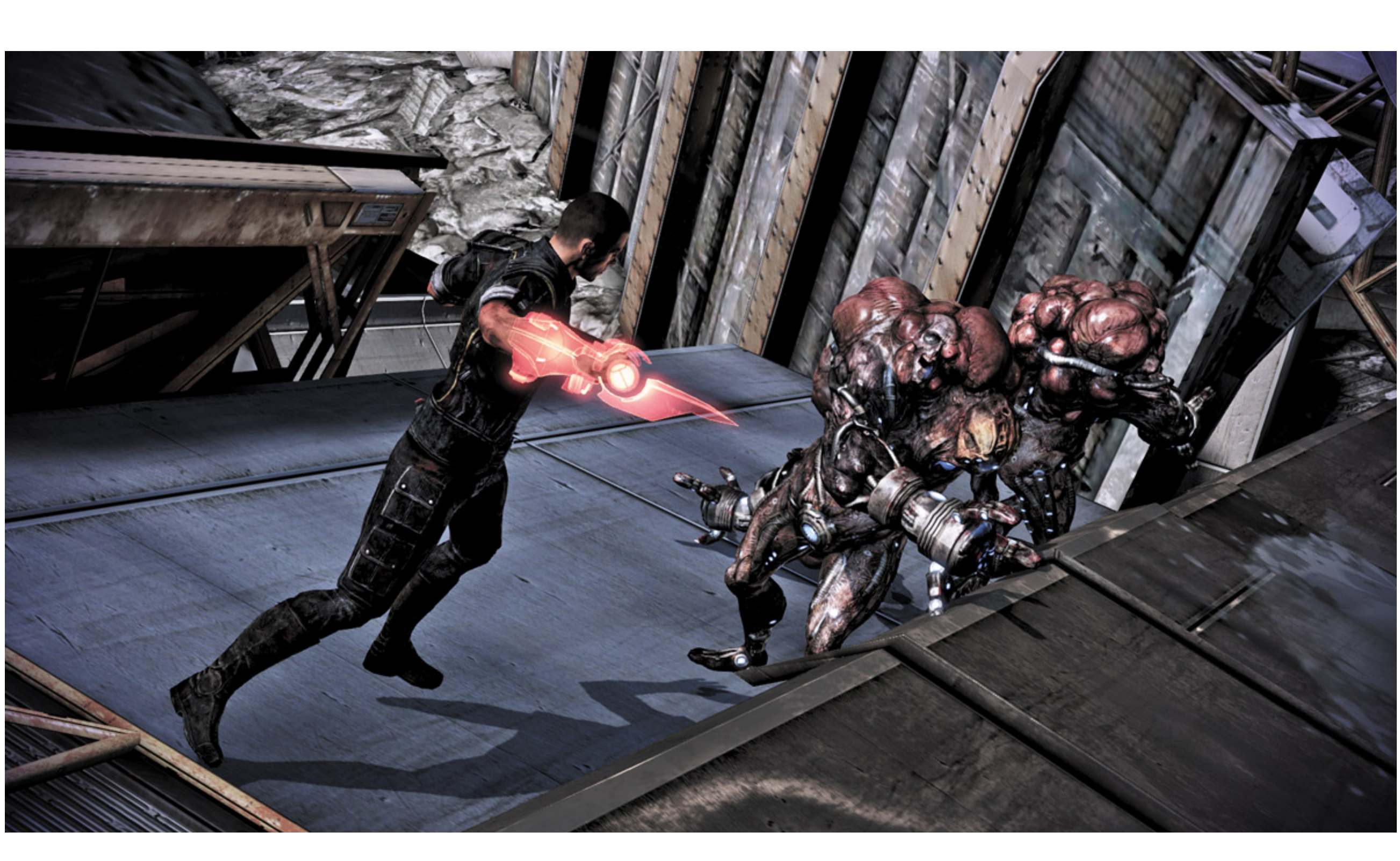
With the admiral on your squad, you now have his Power, Concussive Shot, to work with as well. Experiment with it, using it to knock enemies away before attacking with weapons fire.

Once you've cleared the area, make a right, drop into the next area, and walk to the end to find both the radio and the **M-8 Avenger** assault rifle. Activate the radio to call for help.

The Normandy gets your distress call and comes to your rescue. Unfortunately, a group of cannibals arrives before your escape vessel, so take cover and hold your position until help arrives.

ITEM REQUISITION

Pick up the **M-8 Avenger** before activating the radio. Activating the radio will trigger a cutscene and you won't be able to pick up the Avenger anymore, but you will automatically be equipped with it.



Several waves of cannibals will attack, but if you pick your shots carefully, you can hold them off. Keep the admiral behind cover to your right while you take the left.

If you want to leave your cover and use class-specific abilities, do so only after whittling down the cannibal numbers.

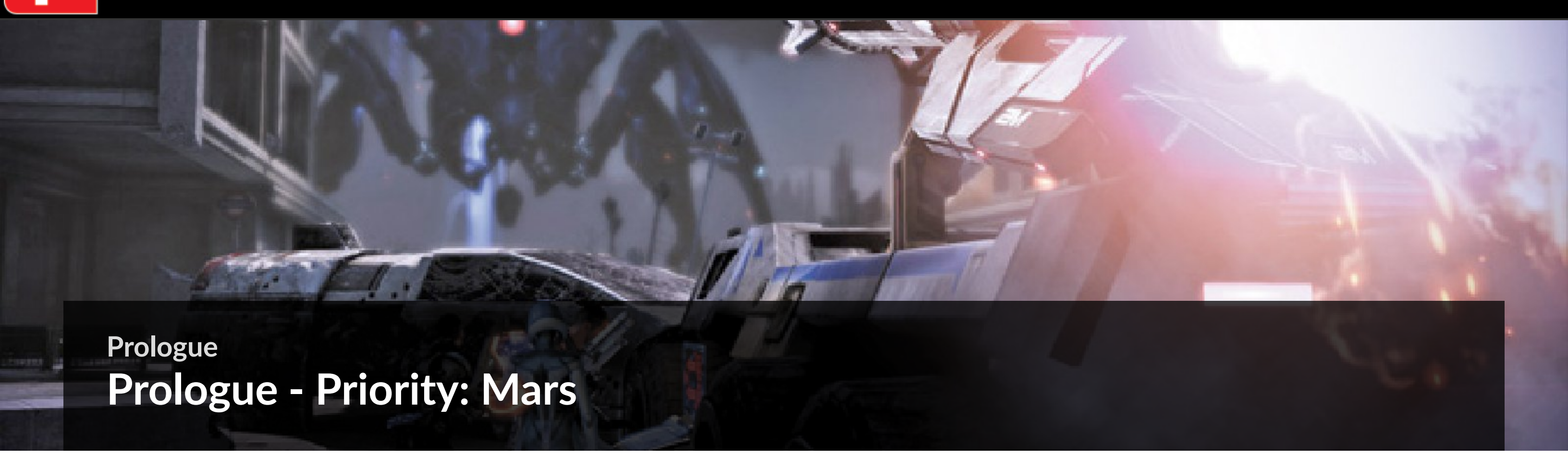
The gap between you and the cannibals is wide, and the Reaper attackers won't leave their position to get too close to yours, so you have the advantage here.

Just as you run out of ammunition, the rescue ship arrives. Run to the nearby beacon for a pickup and escape to the Normandy. Before you go, however, Anderson reinstates you as an Alliance commander.

Welcome back.

ITEM REQUISITION RUNDOWN

M-8 Avenger	**M-3 Predator**



Prologue

Prologue - Priority: Mars

Admiral Hackett ordered the Normandy to Mars to locate new Prothean data that could help defeat the Reapers, but the Archives on Mars are not responding. Investigate the dig site and find the Prothean data.

MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: The surface of Mars can provide several interesting encounters. You'll have a wide array of tactical strategies at your disposal, ranging from long-range shoot-outs to duck-and-cover firefights.

Once inside the facility, however, you'll encounter several new enemies, from Assault Troopers to Guardians to Centurions.

The long, narrow halls of the facility will force you to be creative using head-on tactics, while larger, multistoried areas will grant you a height advantage if you want to pick off your foes from a safe vantage point.

Consequence Overview: Before setting out on the mission, you'll have an encounter with James that allows you to make a Paragon decision, or, if you've chosen a Renegade dialogue choice, a Renegade "interrupt" will appear.

Also during this mission, either Kaidan or Ashley, depending on who you chose at the start of the game, begins to cautiously question your allegiance to the Alliance.

If you want to recruit them for your squad long-term, begin convincing them now that you're no longer working with Cerberus and are 100 percent dedicated to the Alliance.

Halfway through the mission, you'll also engage Liara in a conversation that allows you to be either sweet and sympathetic or cold and curt.

Depending on your dialogue choices, you can accrue more Paragon/Renegade points.

Finally, when you encounter an old shadow from your past, you'll have the opportunity to press him a bit more on his current motivations.

Do so and you'll be presented with the chance for another Paragon/Renegade dialogue decision.

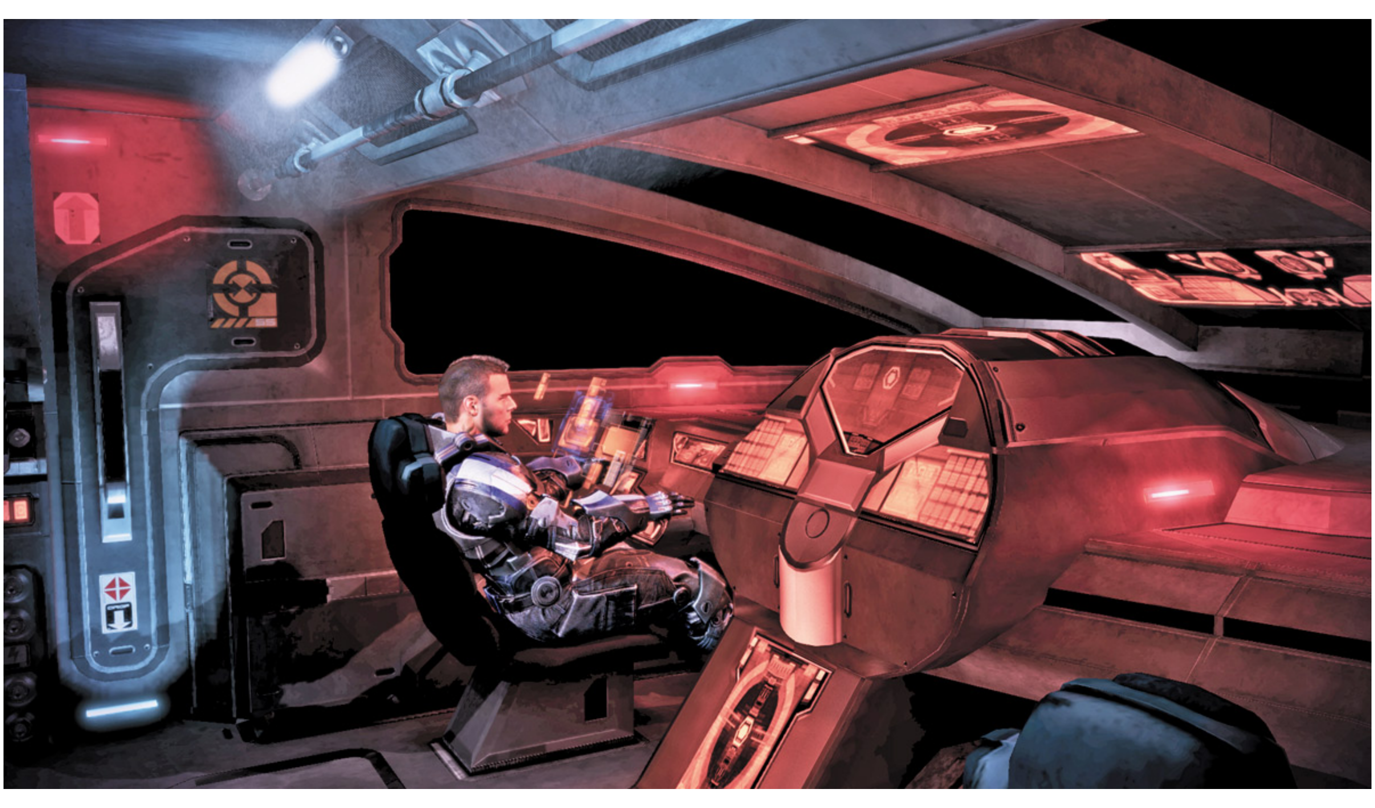
Paragon/Renegade

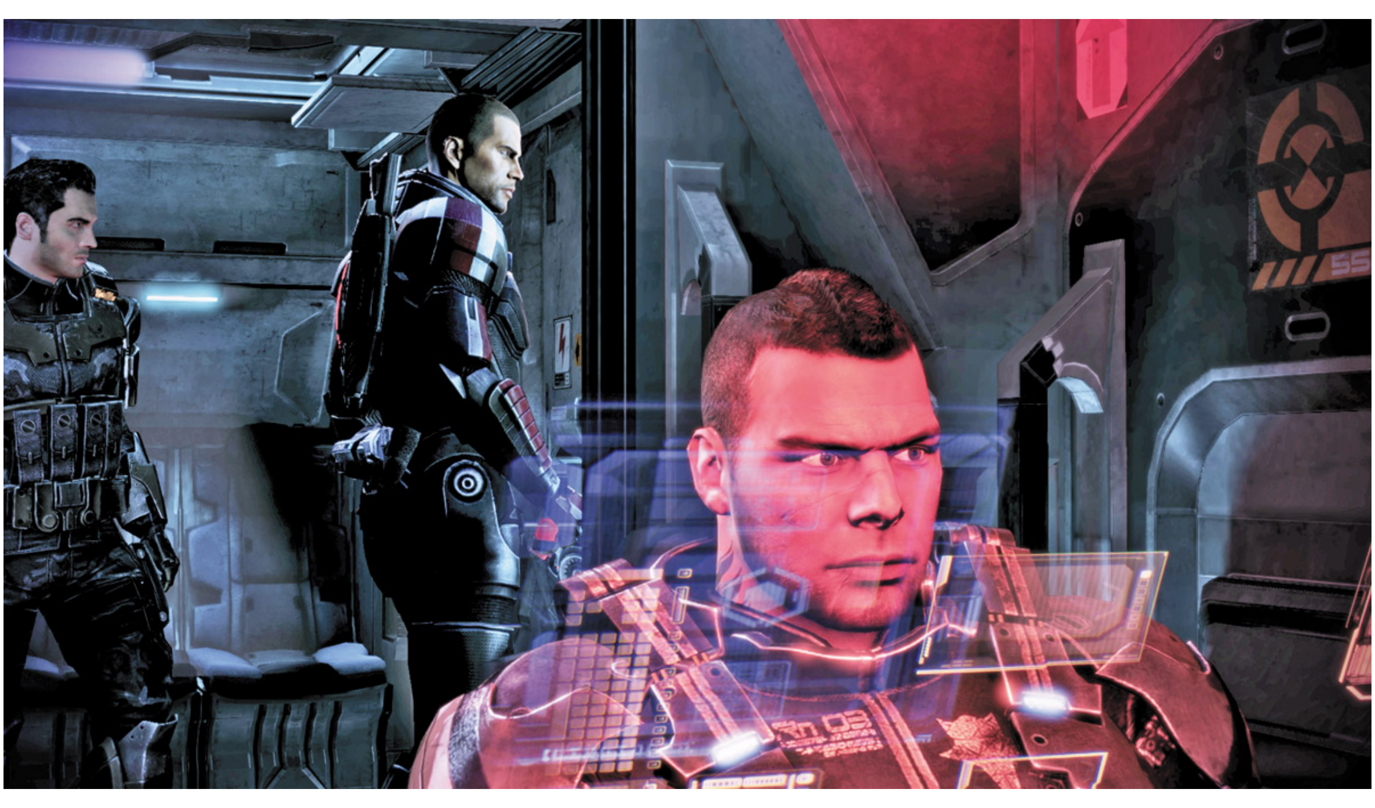
Successfully persuading the Illusive Man in this conversation is critical to being able to successfully persuade him during your final conversation at the end of the game.

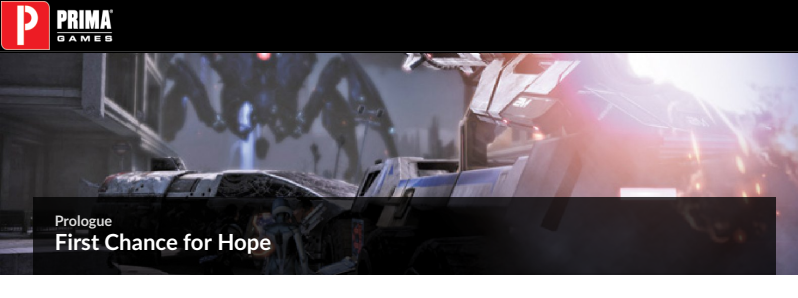
If you don't persuade him here, you won't be able to fully persuade him at the end.

ITEM REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Ariake Technologies Gauntlets	Med Kit
Datapad	Shotgun High-Caliber Barrel
Kassa Fabrication Chestplat	Shotgun Shredder Mod
M-4 Shuriken SMG	SMG Scope
M-15 Vindicator	SMG Ultralight Materials
M-23 Katana	Sniper Rifle Concentration
M-92 Mantis	Module
Medical Station	Sniper Rifle Extended Barrel

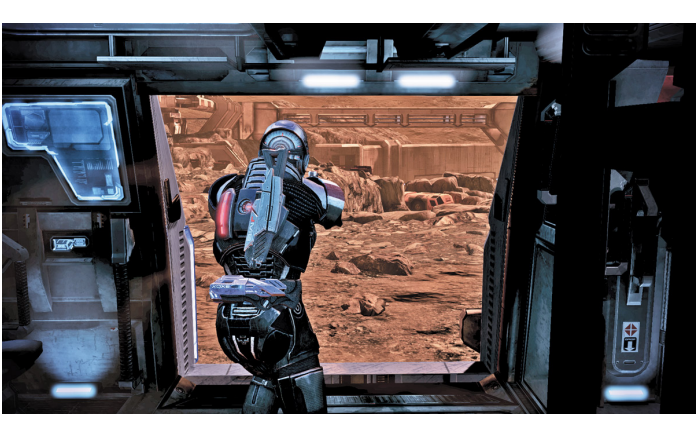


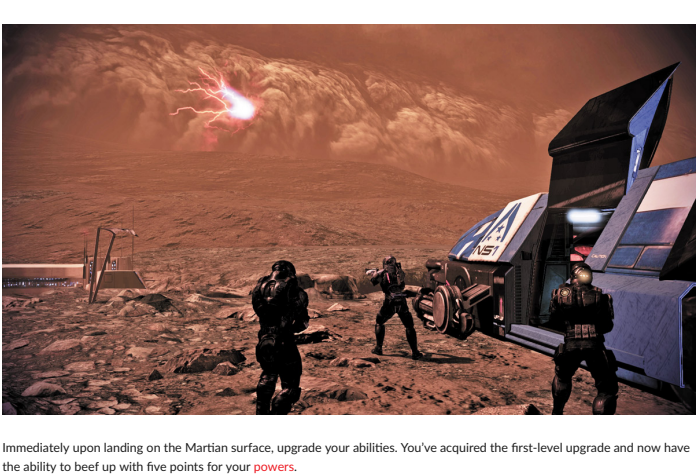




Prologue

First Chance for Hope





Immediately upon landing on the Martian surface, upgrade your abilities. You've acquired the first-level upgrade and now have the ability to beef up with five points for your powers.

The choice of upgrades should reflect your ultimate preference in play style (see our recommendations in the *Squad* section).

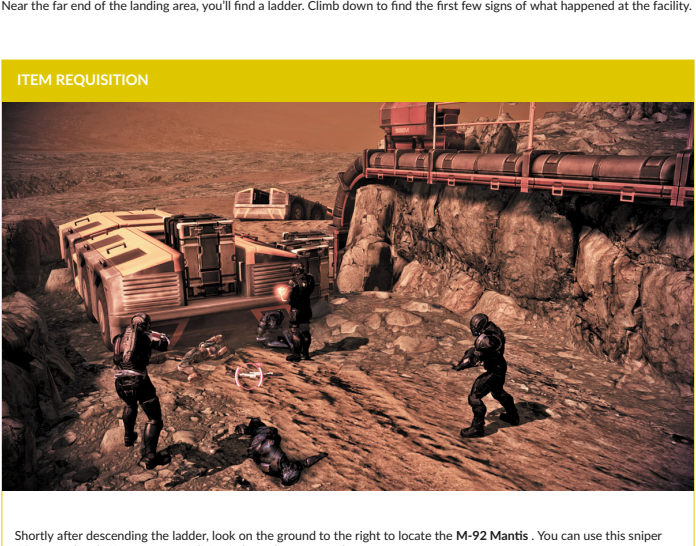
However, regardless of what your initial class choice was, we recommend using the first-level upgrade on your class's specialty power, such as the Vanguard's Biotic Charge, the Infiltrator's Tactical Cloak, and so on.

The Martian surface is volatile, and a storm is rolling in from the distance as you land. Your time on this base will be limited.

Once you've upgraded your skills, turn right as you exit the shuttle and walk toward the oncoming storm.

Near the far end of the landing area, you'll find a ladder. Climb down to find the first few signs of what happened at the facility.

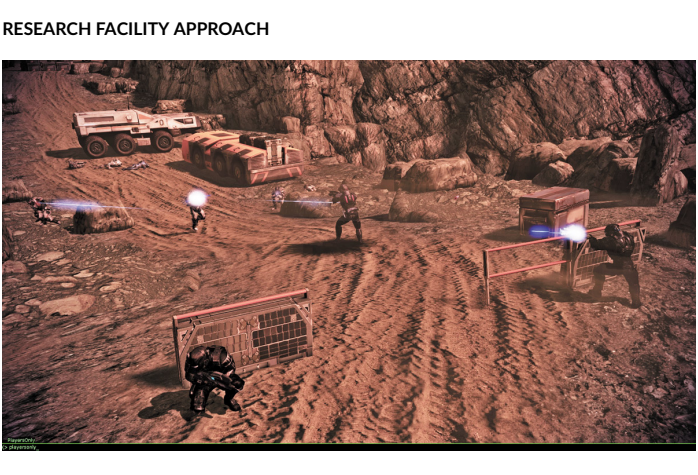
ITEM REQUISITION



Shortly after descending the ladder, look on the ground to the right to locate the **M-92 Mantis** . You can use this sniper rifle immediately if you are specializing in long-distance combat.

However, its increased weight might make it less desirable for Biotic-specific combat builds that require a faster power-recharge time.

RESEARCH FACILITY APPROACH



After descending the ladder, turn left and send James and Ashley ahead of you. Order them to take cover behind the short walls before sneaking up and taking cover as well.

As the path turns left toward the facility entrance, you spy several Cerberus Assault Troopers executing facility workers!

If you equipped the Mantis, you can zoom in with the sniper scope and take out one, maybe even two, Cerberus operatives before the rest rush for cover.

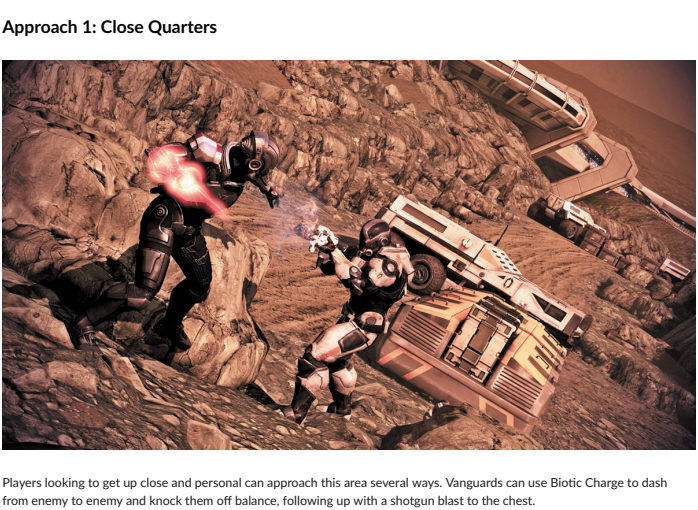
If you are using other weapons, remain behind cover and allow the Cerberus soldiers to rush toward your position.

Stay behind cover as they approach and allow them to get in range before popping out and firing. The Cerberus Assault Trooper is armored but susceptible to well-placed headshots or close-range shotgun blasts.

The area leading to the facility entrance is a short, narrow road with plenty of vehicles, crates, and small structures you can use for cover. After taking down the first wave of enemies, carefully lead your squad down the path past the large transport vehicle.

When you reach the area with the convoy, immediately order your squad to cover and wait for the Cerberus forces to rush out. Watch for the Cerberus troops to take position, then begin picking them off.

Approach 1: Close Quarters



Players looking to get up close and personal can approach this area several ways. Vanguards can use Biotic Charge to dash from enemy to enemy and knock them off balance, following up with a shotgun blast to the chest.

Meanwhile, the rest of the squad can play cleanup, as they engage any soldiers you don't. If you're not a Vanguard, you can use your squad's abilities to split the enemy forces.

Shift your squad left while you dash right, shifting from cover to cover, and get in close enough to decimate the enemy forces with your shotgun.

Approach 2: Slow and Steady

If close-quarters combat is too chaotic for your taste, you can also approach this battle from a more methodical standpoint. Use a medium-range assault rifle, activate Incendiary, Cryo, or Disrupter Ammo, and pick off your foes as they search for cover.

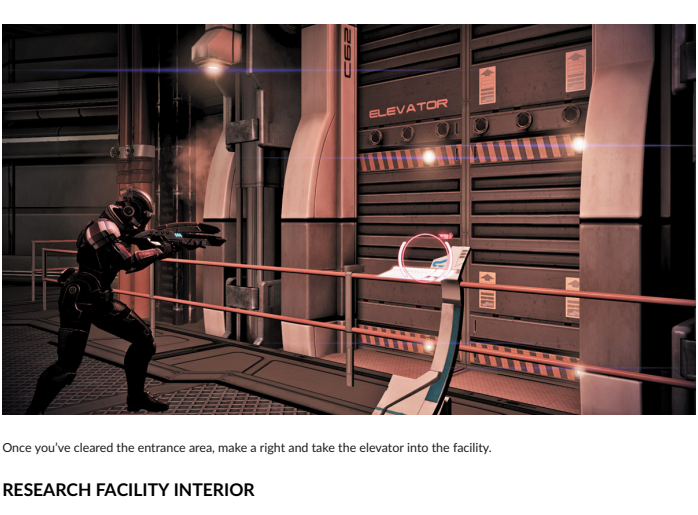
James's frag grenades can also come in handy during this encounter, as he helps you flush out enemies from cover so you can pick them off from medium range.

If you'd like something a bit more reliable than frag grenades, Adept-class players can use Singularity to flush out enemies from cover, then pick them off while they float helplessly over the ground.

TIP

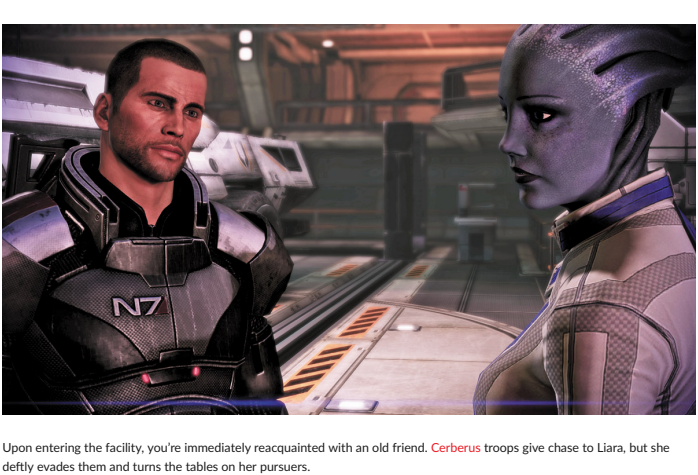
Talented Sniper classes such as Soldiers and Infiltrators can make short work of the enemies in this area.

While Soldiers can slow down time to get headshots, Infiltrators can use the damage bonus from their Tactical Cloak to increase the lethality of their sniper rifle.



Once you've cleared the entrance area, make a right and take the elevator into the facility.

RESEARCH FACILITY INTERIOR

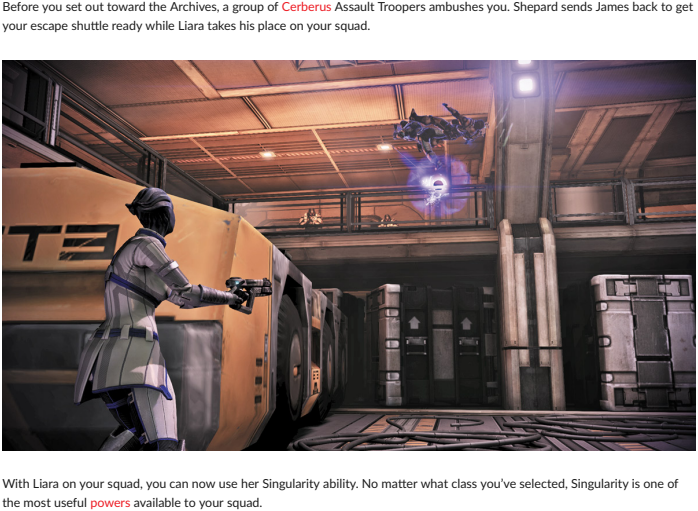


Upon entering the facility, you're immediately reacquainted with an old friend. Cerberus troops give chase to Liara, but she deftly evades them and turns the tables on her pursuers.

Once she's dispatched her Cerberus hunters, she informs you of her recent exploits. She's after the same information that you are: plans for a Prothean device believed to be capable of stopping the Reapers.

The Archives holding the information, however, are across a long tramway. If Cerberus hasn't locked down the area, you should be able to access the Archives and acquire the plans for the Prothean device.

Before you set out toward the Archives, a group of Cerberus Assault Troopers ambushes you. Shepard sends James back to get your escape shuttle ready while Liara takes his place on your squad.



With Liara on your squad, you can now use her Singularity ability. No matter what class you've selected, Singularity is one of the most useful powers available to your squad.

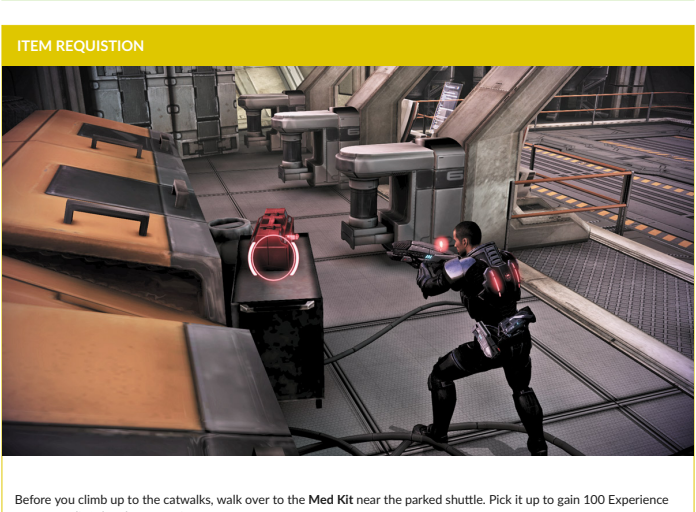
Order Liara to use Singularity on the Cerberus soldiers on the deck above you, then pick them off with a weapon of your choice.

If any soldiers are still standing when Singularity wears off, stay behind cover and continue to pick them off. Take down the small squad of Cerberus soldiers, then find a way onto the catwalks above.

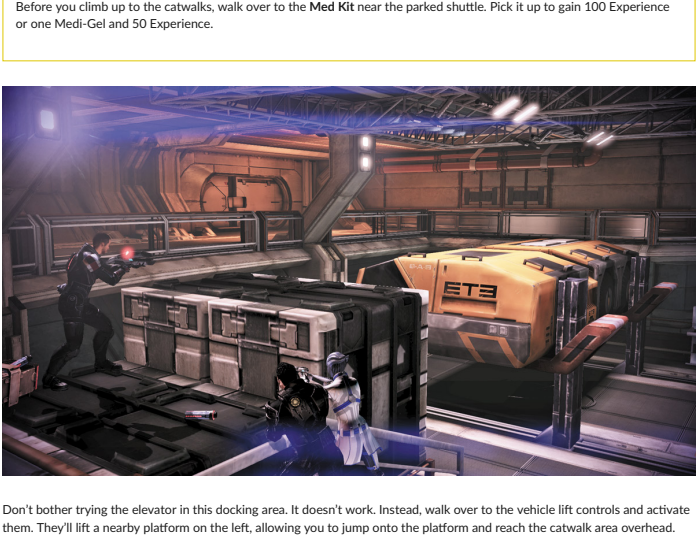
TIP

Since Singularity also amplifies Biotic abilities, Adept-class players can combine their powers with Singularity to create some explosive combinations. Now is as good a time as any to try some out.

ITEM REQUISITION

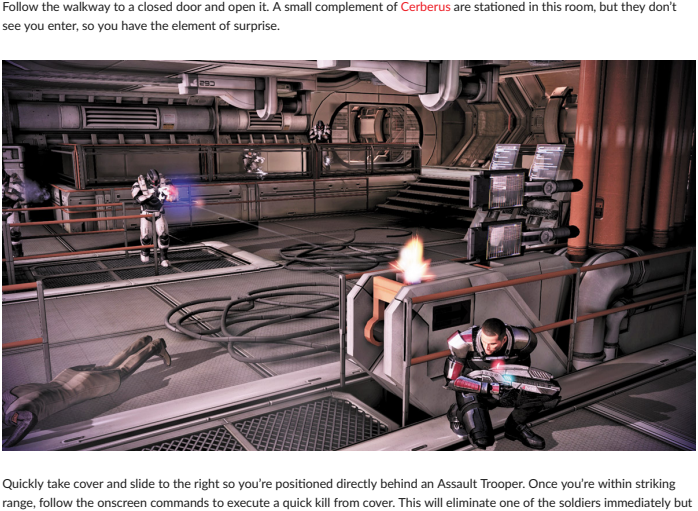


Before you climb up to the catwalks, walk over to the **Med Kit** near the parked shuttle. Pick it up to gain 100 Experience or one Medi-Gel and 50 Experience.



Don't bother trying the elevator in this docking area. It doesn't work. Instead, walk over to the vehicle lift controls and activate them. They'll lift a nearby platform on the left, allowing you to jump onto the platform and reach the catwalk area overhead.

Follow the walkway to a closed door and open it. A small complement of Cerberus are stationed in this room, but they don't see you enter, so you have the element of surprise.



Quickly take cover and slide to the right so you're positioned directly behind an Assault Trooper. Once you're within striking range, follow the onscreen commands to execute a quick kill from cover. This will eliminate one of the soldiers immediately but will alert the rest.

With the hornet's nest stirred, you're free to rush out of cover and quickly put down the rest of the enemies in the room.

TIP

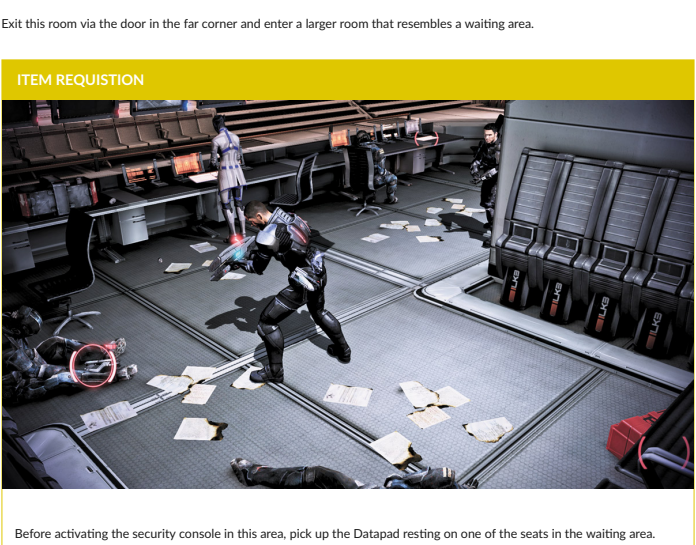
This room is very small, and there aren't many enemies to contend with, so be smart. Vanguard- and Infiltrator-class players can have a great time clearing it.

Either charge from enemy to enemy as a Vanguard, or use your Tactical Cloak to sneak up on foes while they're engaged with your squadmates as an Infiltrator.

Similarly, Adept-class players can combine their powers to create great, destructive combinations in close-quarters combat.

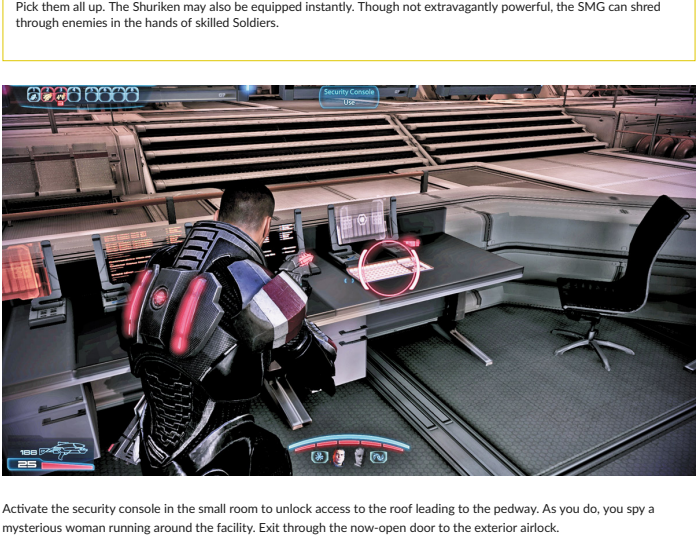
Exit this room via the door in the far corner and enter a larger room that resembles a waiting area.

ITEM REQUISITION

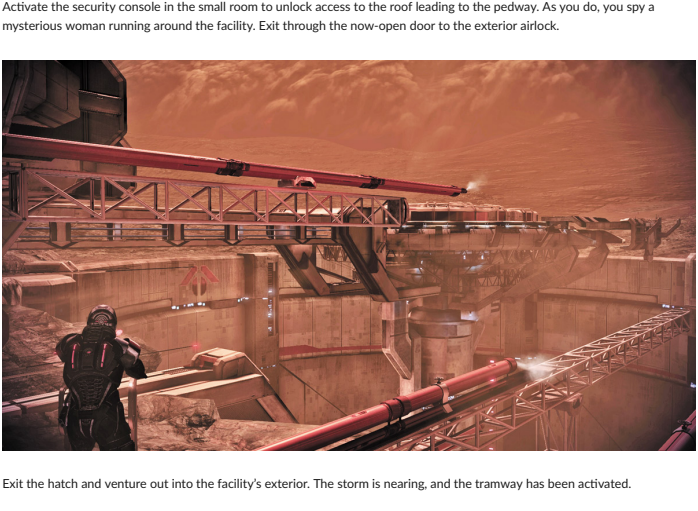


Before activating the security console in this area, pick up the Datapad resting on one of the seats in the waiting area. There is also a **Med Kit** , **Ariake Technologies Gauntlets** , and the **M-4 Shuriken SMG** in the security room.

Pick them all up. The Shuriken may also be equipped instantly. Though not extravagantly powerful, the SMG can shred through enemies in the hands of skilled Soldiers.



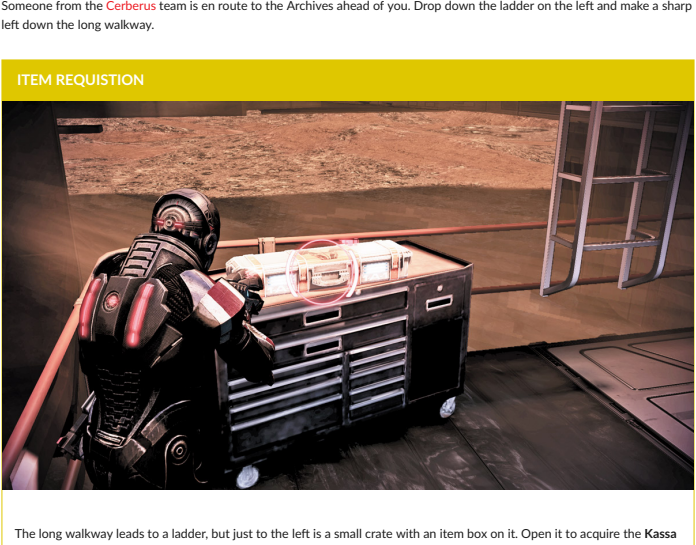
Activate the security console in the small room to unlock access to the roof leading to the pedway. As you do, you spy a mysterious woman running around the facility. Exit through the now-open door to the exterior airlock.



Exit the hatch and venture out into the facility's exterior. The storm is nearing, and the tramway has been activated.

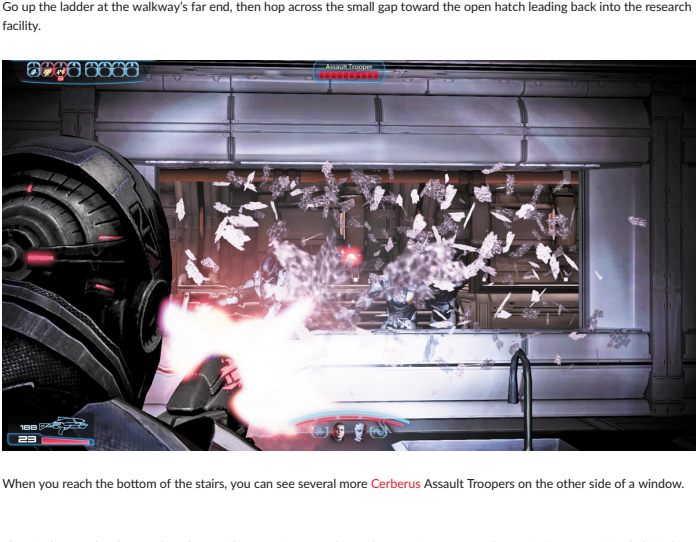
Someone from the Cerberus team is en route to the Archives ahead of you. Drop down the ladder on the left and make a sharp left down the long walkway.

ITEM REQUISITION



The long walkway leads to a ladder, but just to the left is a small crate with an item box on it. Open it to acquire the **Kassa Fabrication Chestplate** .

Go up the ladder at the walkway's far end, then hop across the small gap toward the open hatch leading back into the research facility.

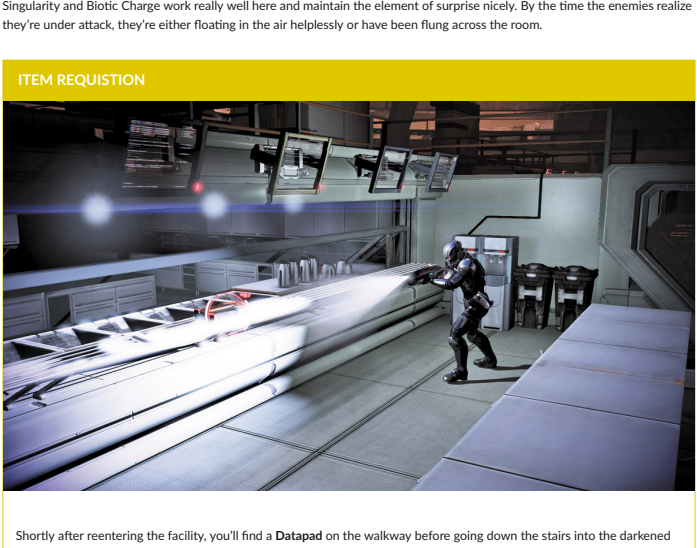


When you reach the bottom of the stairs, you can see several more Cerberus Assault Troopers on the other side of a window.

The window can be shattered easily, so either get a jump on the Cerberus using weapons fire or Biotics, or wait for half of the Troopers to leave once they've finished their conversation.

Singularity and Biotic Charge work really well here and maintain the element of surprise nicely. By the time the enemies realize they're under attack, they're either floating in the air helplessly or have been flung across the room.

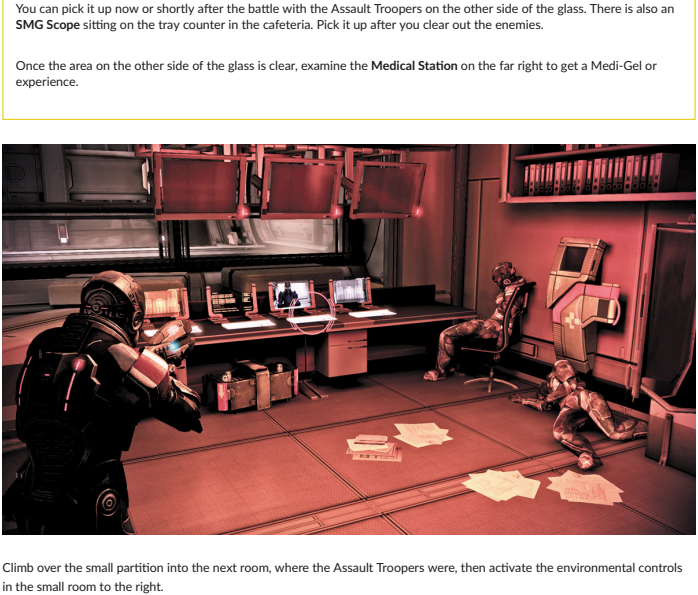
ITEM REQUISITION



Shortly after reentering the facility, you'll find a **Datapad** on the walkway before going down the stairs into the darkened room.

You can pick it up now or shortly after the battle with the Assault Troopers on the other side of the glass. There is also an **SMG Scope** sitting on the tray counter in the cafeteria. Pick it up after you clear out the enemies.

Once the area on the other side of the glass is clear, examine the **Medical Station** on the far right to get a Medi-Gel or experience.



Climb over the small partition into the next room, where the Assault Troopers were, then activate the environmental controls in the small room to the right.

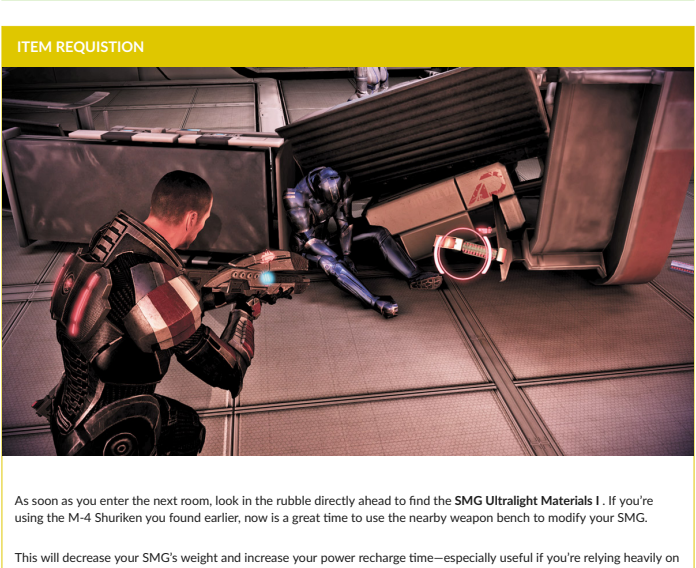
This repressurizes the room, and all of the lights come back on. A small security recording also reveals what happened in the facility prior to your arrival.

Liara opens the door leading out of this area and toward the core transportation section. Exit through the newly unlocked door on the room's far side.

TIP

You can speak with Liara after she opens the door.

ITEM REQUISITION



As soon as you enter the next room, look in the rubble directly ahead to find the **SMG Ultralight Materials I** . If you're using the M-4 Shuriken you found earlier, now is a great time to use the nearby weapon bench to modify your SMG.

This will decrease your SMG's weight and increase your power recharge time—especially useful if you're relying heavily on Biotic powers. There is also a **Datapad** on the ground, just left of the stairs.

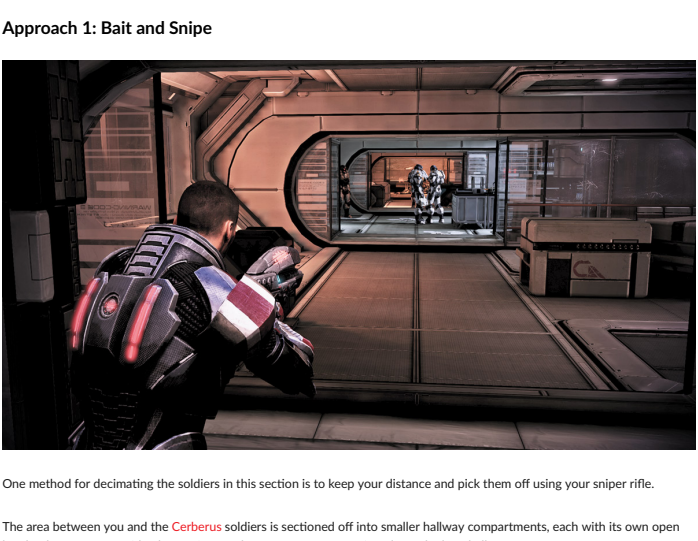
TIP

Even if you're not using the SMG, try using the weapon bench nearby to apply your two new mods (SMG Scope 1 and SMG Ultralight Materials I) to see how they work. Once applied, the weapon will automatically upgrade when new levels for mods are located.

So if you upgrade your SMG to SMG Ultralight Materials I, they will automatically upgrade to SMG Ultralight Materials II as soon as you acquire the higher-level mod.

Go up the stairs on the right and open the door. At the walkway's far end are several Cerberus Assault Troopers.

Approach 1: Bait and Snipe



One method for decimating the soldiers in this section is to keep your distance and pick them off using your sniper rifle.

The area between you and the Cerberus soldiers is sectioned off into smaller hallway compartments, each with its own open hatch. These areas provide plenty of cover that grant you a great view down the long hallway.

While you stay behind at a distance, use your "go to" command to direct your squad down the hall closer to the enemy squad.

As they draw the enemy fire, you can use your sniper rifle to pick them off when they pop out of cover to fire at your comrades.

When the Guardians rush out from down the hall, zero in through the small gap in their shield to get headshots with every shot. If you miss, the impact of your bullet will knock them off balance enough for your squad to fire on them while they're exposed.

Approach 2: Rush and Attack

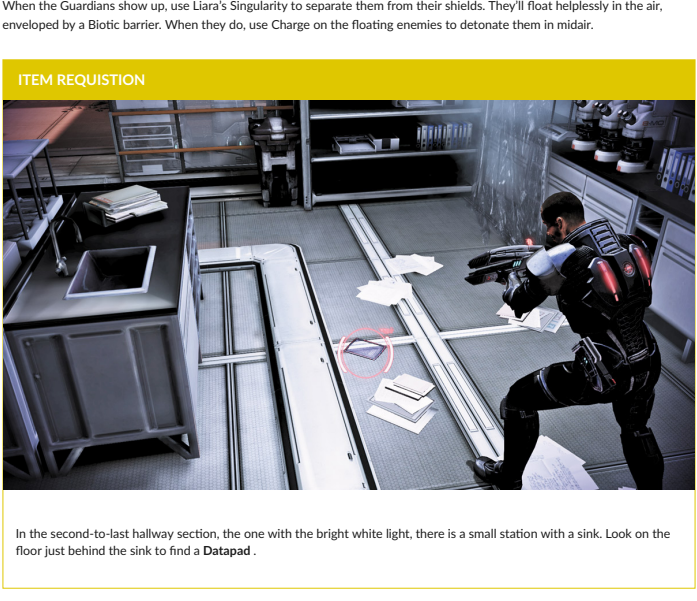
For Vanguards, an alternate approach would be to use Biotic Charge as soon as you see the enemies and catch them by surprise.

You'll knock one down and eliminate him, while the others scramble for cover. The speed with which you close the gap will be too much for them.

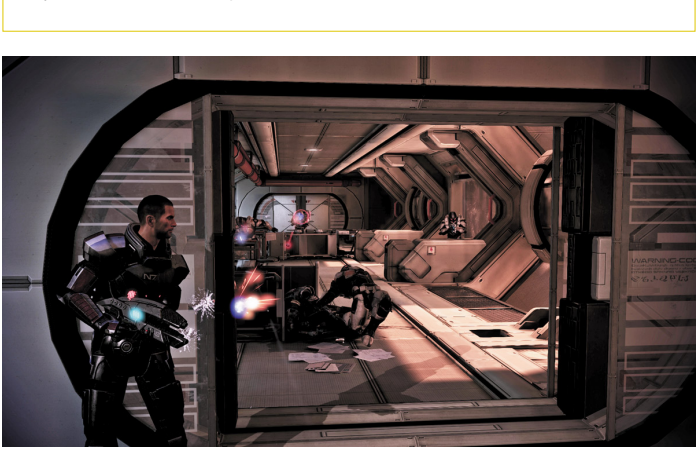
Immediately open fire on the nearest foe while your powers recharge. When they do, use Biotic Charge again to take out another nearby foe.

When the Guardians show up, use Liara's Singularity to separate them from their shields. They'll float helplessly in the air, enveloped by a Biotic barrier. When they do, use Charge on the floating enemies to detonate them in midair.

ITEM REQUISITION



In the second-to-last hallway section, the one with the bright white light, there is a small station with a sink. Look on the floor just behind the sink to find a **Datapad** .

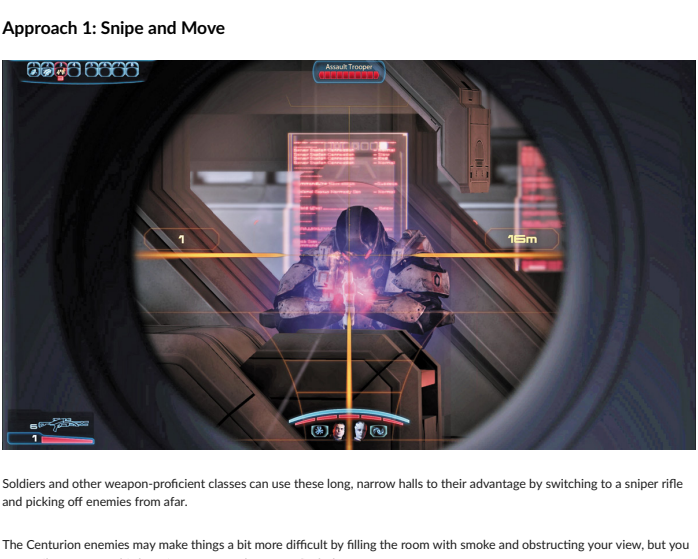


Make a sharp left at the hall's far end and quickly take cover against a wall on either side of the hall. The next few sections of hallway are very similar to the first (prior to the sharp left turn).

However, each small section in this long hall also splits up into two sections, allowing you to venture down the main hall or slip through a small path on the left side of each section.

Depending on your class of choice, you can either take the fight into the hall or hang back while the Cerberus forces shift from cover to cover.

Approach 1: Snipe and Move



Soldiers and other weapon-proficient classes can use these long, narrow halls to their advantage by switching to a sniper rifle and picking off enemies from afar.

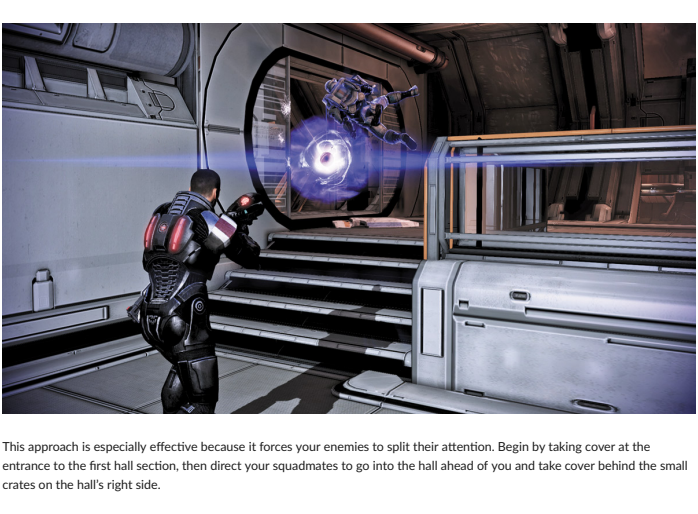
The Centurion enemies may make things a bit more difficult by filling the room with smoke and obstructing your view, but you can easily overcome this by using your squadmates to flush them out.

If you stay far enough behind the front lines of fire, you can wait for the smoke to dissipate a bit, then pick your shots.

Soldier-class players can use Adrenaline to slow time once the smoke is gone and get multiple shots between enemies. If you wait too long, the halls will fill with smoke again before you can take another shot.

Once the first section is clear, rush in behind your advancing squad, switch to a weapon with slightly better medium kill range, and pick another spot for cover. Continue moving down the hall this way until you've driven the Cerberus soldiers all the way back.

Approach 2: Slip In Through the Side Door



This approach is especially effective because it forces your enemies to split their attention. Begin by taking cover at the entrance to the first hall section, then direct your squadmates to go into the hall ahead of you and take cover behind the small crates on the hall's right side.

As soon as they've engaged the enemy, rush in behind them and sprint down the stairs on the hall's left side. This side runs all the way up the hall, bypassing a lot of firefight between you and the Cerberus soldiers.

When you safely reach the hall's far end, you can engage the enemies from behind or flank them if they're nearby.

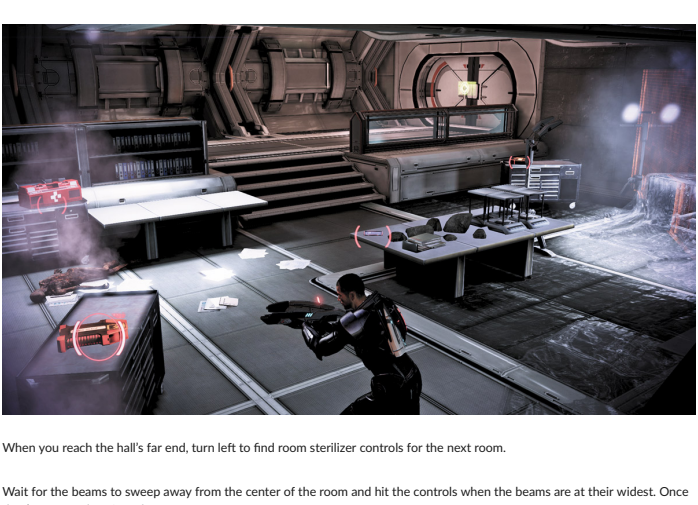
Use a weapon with good close-range damage or combine your squad's powers with melee combat to take out foes quickly.

Adept-class players can also make good use of the side hall. Rather than engage enemies at the hall's far end with traditional weapons fire, use powers like Pull or Singularity to weaken the Cerberus forces for your squad to finish them off.

Caution

Don't rush in if there is a lot of smoke still filling the hall. Cerberus Guardians and Assault Troopers are great melee combatants capable of lowering your shields with one well-placed melee blow.

Once your shields are down, the rest of the enemies in the hall can shred through your health with ease.



When you reach the hall's far end, turn left to find room sterilizer controls for the next room.

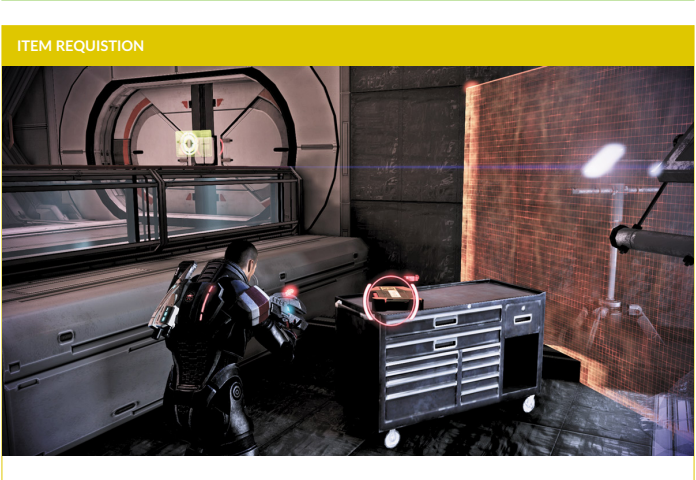
Wait for the beams to sweep away from the center of the room and hit the controls when the beams are at their widest. Once they've stopped, go into the room.

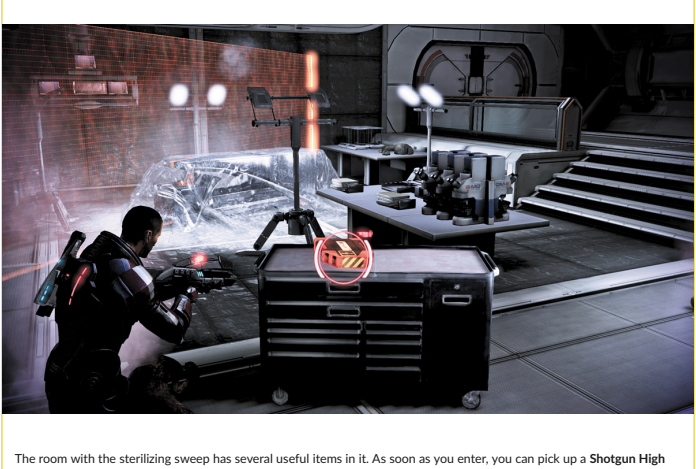
TIP

Watch the beams carefully, they alternate between blocking the door and allowing you access to the door on its widest sweep.

In order to continue, you must time the deactivation right so that its widest sweep doesn't block the door.

ITEM REQUISITION





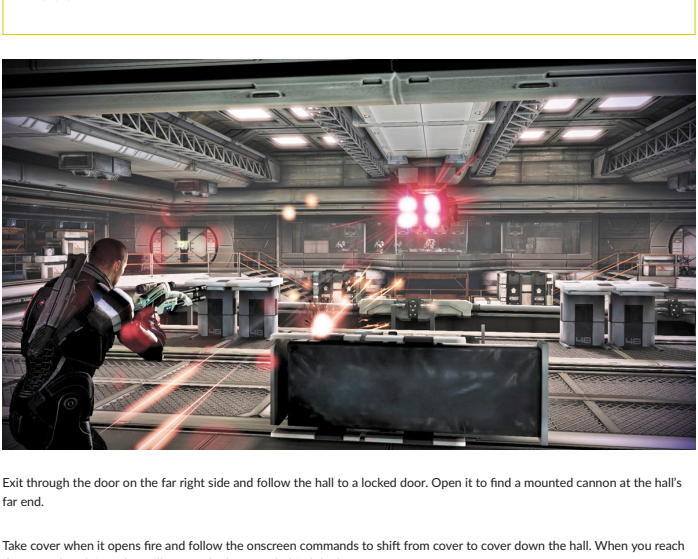
The room with the sterilizing sweep has several useful items in it. As soon as you enter, you can pick up a **Shotgun High Caliber Barrel I** mod.

You can also find a **Med-Kit** and a **Datapad** nearby. To get the **Sniper Rifle Extended Barrel I** , be sure to stop the sweeping beams at their absolute widest, past the pickup, on the room's right side.

If you stop the beams too soon, you won't be able to pick it up because the beam will be in your way.

However, if you're using a class that doesn't start off with a shotgun, you'll find an **M-23 Katana** located here next to the dead Cerberus trooper.

This goes for every weapon in the level—if your chosen class already has that weapon, it will not appear as a pick-up item in the level.



Exit through the door on the far right side and follow the hall to a locked door. Open it to find a mounted cannon at the hall's far end.

Take cover when it opens fire and follow the onscreen commands to shift from cover to cover down the hall. When you reach the far end, rush into the walkway and take cover behind the boxes in front of you.

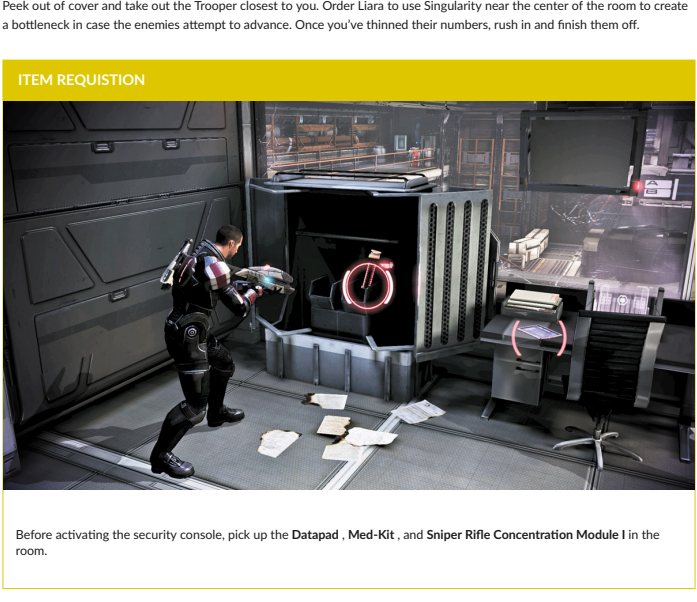
Move left, rolling from cover to cover, and go around the walkway until you flank the wall-mounted machine gun. Once you've reached its left side, it can no longer target you, so it stops firing.

Unfortunately, this leaves the security room full of Cerberus troops for you to contend with.

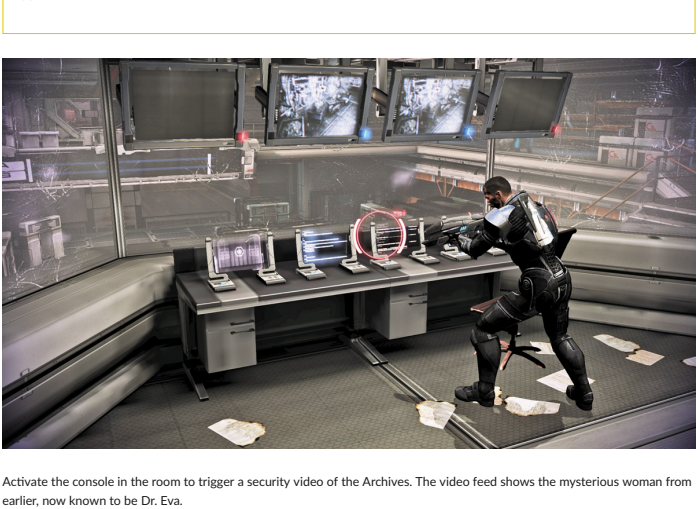
Leave your cover and open the door into their security room. They'll immediately open fire, so take cover behind the wall while your squad moves into position.

Peek out of cover and take out the Trooper closest to you. Order Liara to use Singularity near the center of the room to create a bottleneck in case the enemies attempt to advance. Once you've thinned their numbers, rush in and finish them off.

ITEM REQUISITION



Before activating the security console, pick up the **Datapad** , **Med-Kit** , and **Sniper Rifle Concentration Module I** in the room.



Activate the console in the room to trigger a security video of the Archives. The video feed shows the mysterious woman from earlier, now known to be Dr. Eva.

Clearly a member of Cerberus, the doctor orders her troops around while you remain locked out of the Archives.

A bit of quick thinking on the part of your squad, however, fixes that as you fool the Cerberus troops to send you a tram.

Before the tram arrives, you have enough time to formulate a plan of attack and set up an ambush on the incoming Cerberus forces.

TIP

You get an opportunity to speak with either Kaidan or Ashley after he or she coerces Cerberus to send a tram. This is one of your first opportunities to get them on your side.

APPROACH 1: FLANK

The easiest way to ambush the troops is to order one squadmate to the left side of the warehouse and another to the right.

You can either take position with one of your squadmates or entrench yourself near the top of the stairs at the center of the room.

While your squadmates flank the enemy forces from both sides, you can open fire from directly ahead of them, creating a 180-degree wall of fire.

As the Cerberus troops rush out of the tram, they're instantly mowed down by your coordinated, triangulated fire.

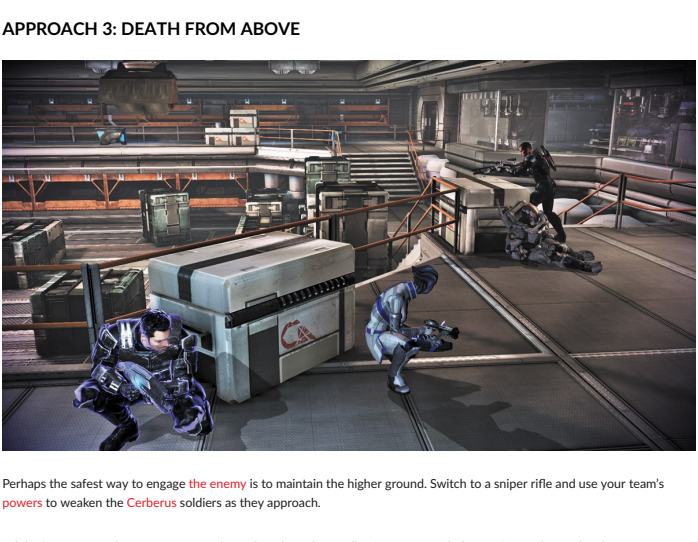
APPROACH 2: HEAD-ON

If you prefer a more direct approach, order your entire squad to the lower level where they can take cover behind many of the crates directly in front of the warehouse entrance.

While this may not be the most dynamic way to ambush the enemy, it does provide you a direct way to engage them without any obstacles in the way.

Also, by bringing the fight to them on the lower level, you have a better line of sight to your squad so you can direct their movements easier. Combine powers here to maximize your damage output and keep a steady stream of fire on them.

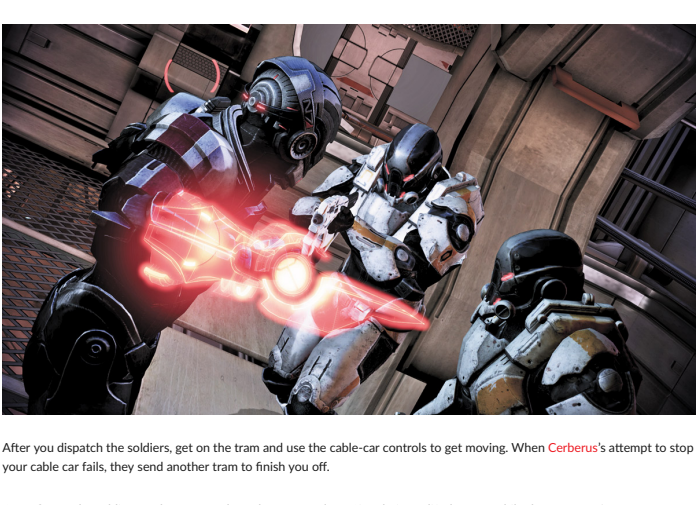
APPROACH 3: DEATH FROM ABOVE



Perhaps the safest way to engage the enemy is to maintain the higher ground. Switch to a sniper rifle and use your team's powers to weaken the Cerberus soldiers as they approach.

While the enemy rushes out, your squad can slow them down, allowing you to pick them off from the top level.

Squadmates must start on the lower level, to the left of the tram door. The tram will not come unless both squadmates are on the left.

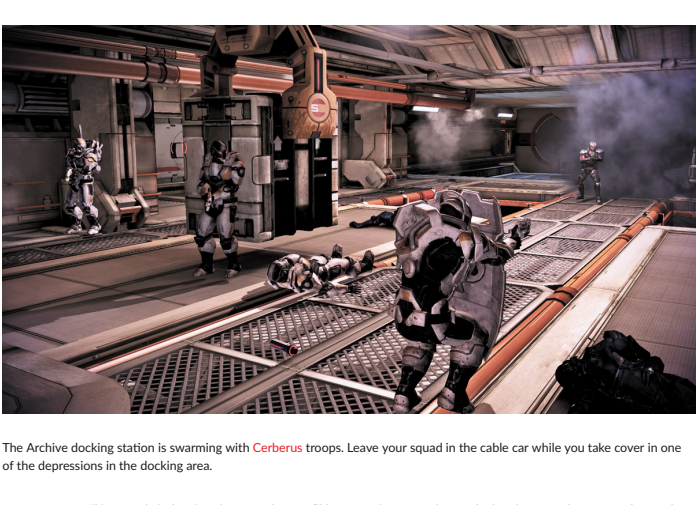


After you dispatch the soldiers, get on the tram and use the cable-car controls to get moving. When Cerberus's attempt to stop your cable car fails, they send another tram to finish you off.

Open fire on the soldiers as they approach on the tram, and use Singularity to lift them up while the tram continues to move.

Fire on the floating foes and use other powers to take them out. If any remain when it pulls up next to you, hop into their cable car and use charged melee blows to finish them off. Use the controls on the new cable car to finish your trek to the Archives.

ARCHIVE DOCKING STATION



The Archive docking station is swarming with Cerberus troops. Leave your squad in the cable car while you take cover in one of the depressions in the docking area.

Your enemies will have a slight height advantage, but you'll have good cover and enough clear line of sight to open fire on them from your lower position.

Shift left and right in the depression, using a combination of weapons fire and powers to take down each Cerberus soldier in the room.

If they pop smoke, order your squad out of their position and closer to you. When enemies emerge from the smoke, focus your fire and powers on that foe to make short work of him.

The second wave of enemies takes a bit more effort to take down. The combination of Guardians and Centurions makes things a bit more difficult with minimal cover. If you stay in the depression, the Guardians will slowly advance and make life difficult.

Rely a bit more on your powers during this wave to either pull away their shields or knock them off balance. Once the Guardians are exposed, they're not much more difficult to defeat than Assault Troopers or Centurions.

Clear this room of the second wave to gain access to the Archives.

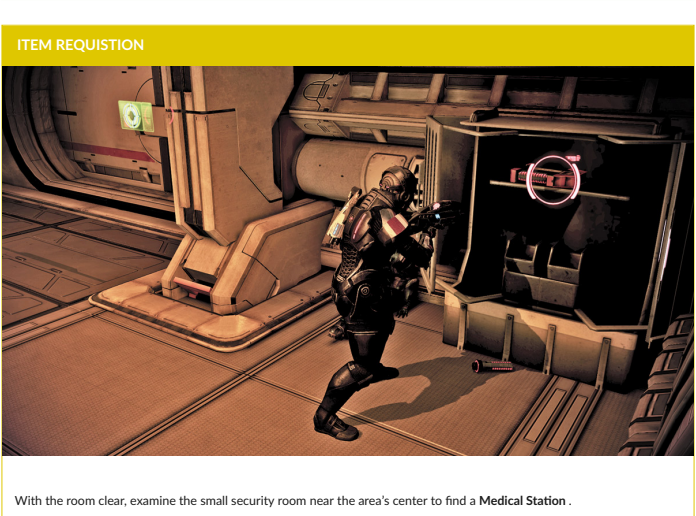
Tip

Vanguards and Infiltrators can move around the area freely using Biotic Charge and Tactical Cloak, respectively.

Rather than hang back and take cover, both classes can roll their sleeves up and get up close and personal with the enemies in the room.

Soldiers can use Adrenaline to slow down their advance while rushing them for melee blows from behind.

ITEM REQUISTION



With the room clear, examine the small security room near the area's center to find a **Medical Station** .

Also, in the far left and right are two pickups, an **M-15 Vindicator Assault Rifle** and the **Shotgun Shredder Mod** . Grab everything before exiting through the rear door.

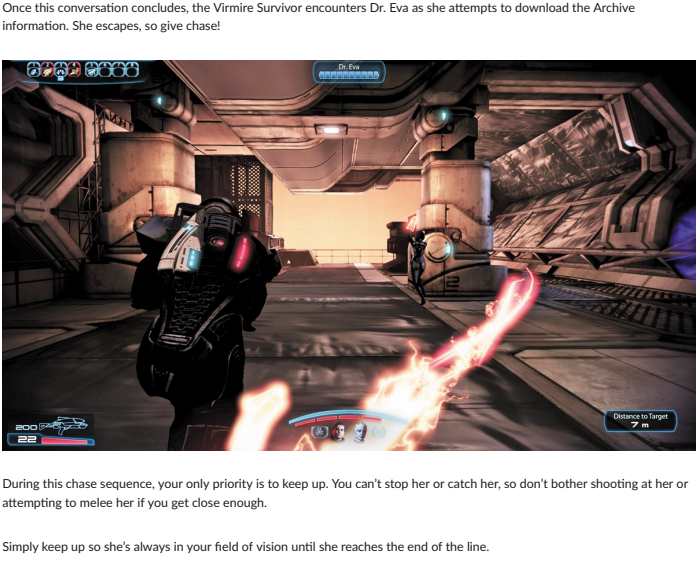
ARCHIVES

Go through the door at the back of the room to enter the Archives. Inside you find that someone has beaten you there. Not only is the information from the Archives being erased, but you're also greeted by an old "friend."

If you want to trigger an opportunity to make a Paragon/Renegade decision, select the "You're wasting time!" dialogue option.

This opens up a slightly different decision tree where you can either attempt to recruit the Illusive Man or blow him off.

Once this conversation concludes, the Virmire Survivor encounters Dr. Eva as she attempts to download the Archive information. She escapes, so give chase!



During this chase sequence, your only priority is to keep up. You can't stop her or catch her, so don't bother shooting at her or attempting to melee her if you get close enough.

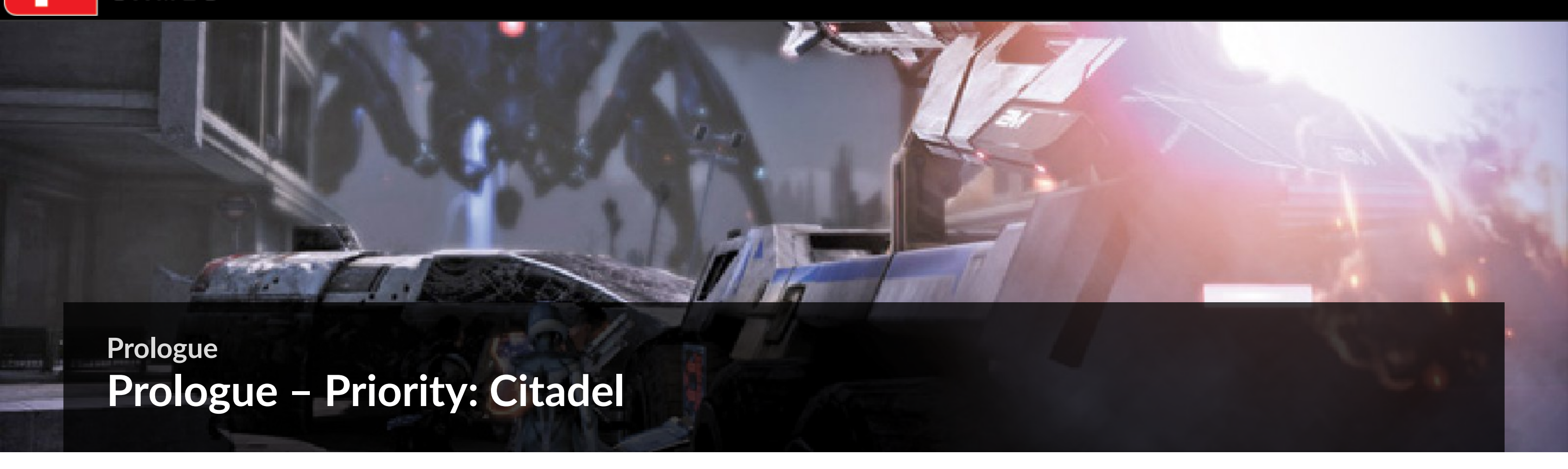
Simply keep up so she's always in your field of vision until she reaches the end of the line.

She'll board an escape shuttle, but James has other plans. He rams her shuttle, creating a huge explosion and slowing her down.

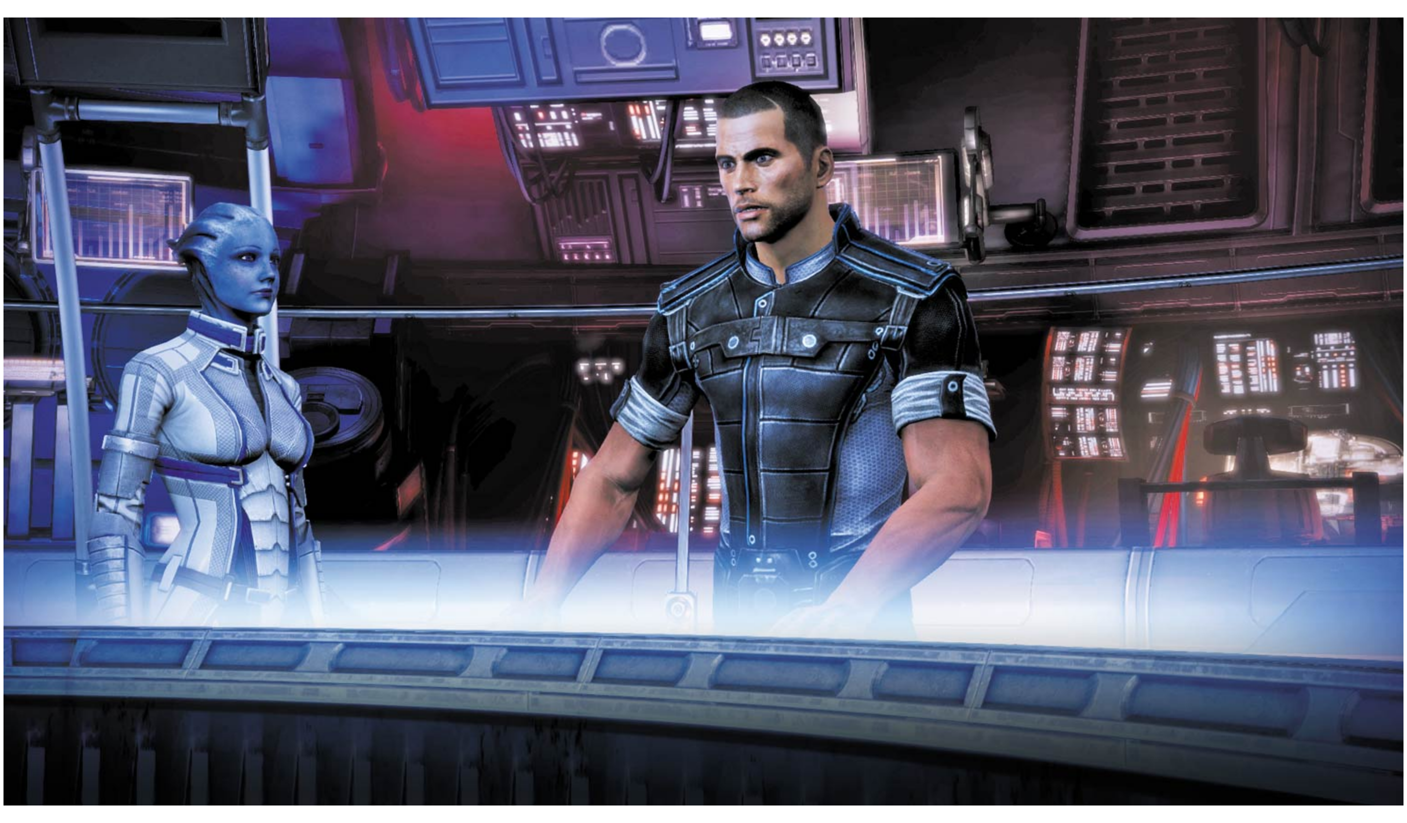
Eventually she emerges from the wreckage, revealing herself as not human at all.

No matter who you chose to be your third companion in the beginning of the game (Kaiden or Ashley), Dr. Eva grabs them and nearly crushes their skull. Open fire on her head when she charges at you.

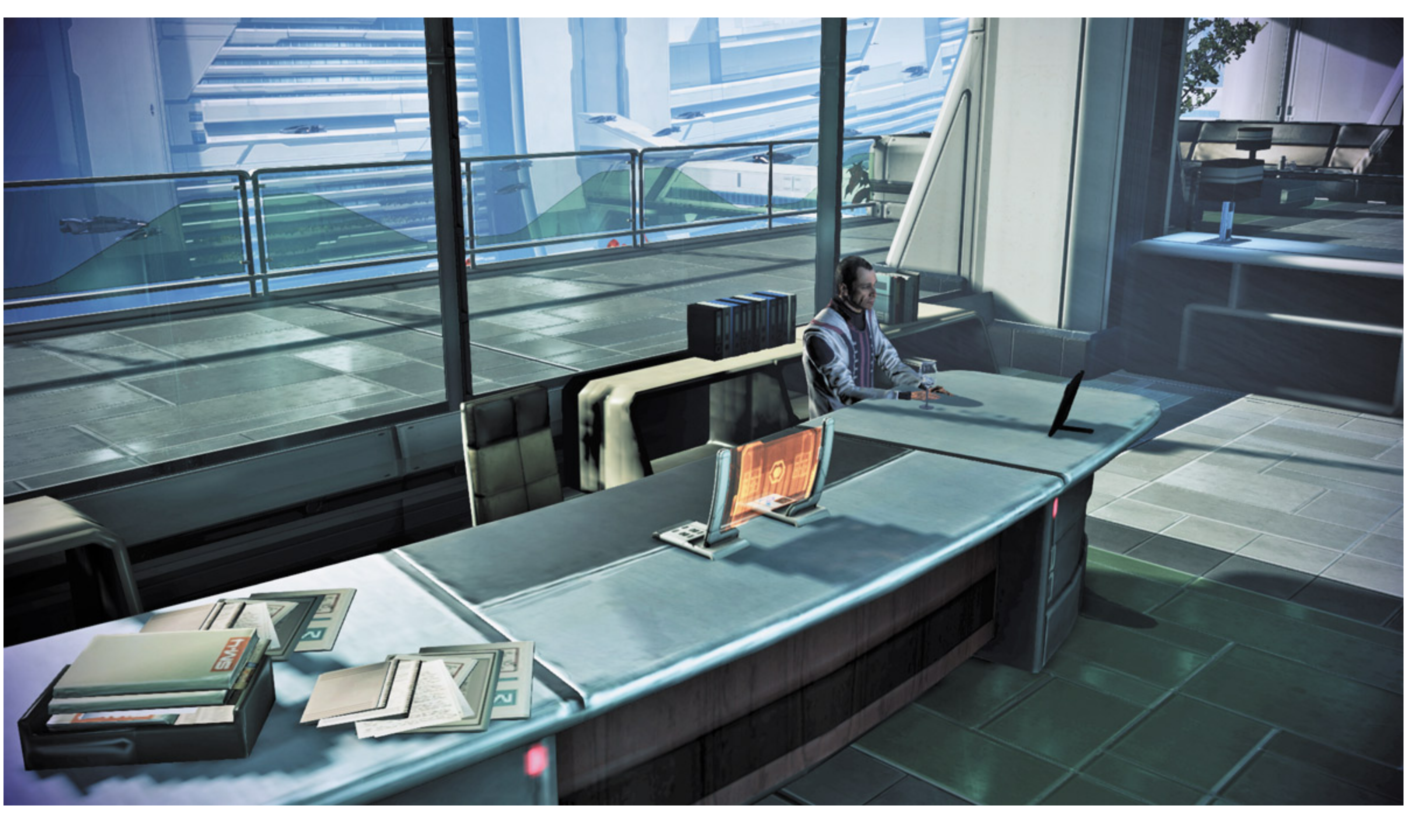
With your third squadmate on the brink of death, the Mars Archives almost entirely erased, and the Reapers arriving on the small red planet, you leave the Martian surface with Dr. Eva's body in hopes of recovering the Prothean data and conclude this mission.



Prologue – Priority: Citadel



The Council must be informed of the Reaper threat and the Prothean device that may be able to stop the Reapers. Go to Councilor Udina's office on the Citadel and convince the Council to send help for the fight against the Reapers.



MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: The majority of this next mission takes place on the Citadel, so there will be no combat scenarios. However, you should still explore the Citadel and get acquainted with the place. You'll most likely come back to the Citadel frequently throughout your adventure.

Consequence Overview: This entire mission consists of speaking with people, so you'll have plenty of opportunities to increase your Renegade/Paragon rating and develop relationships with several old and new faces.

Depending on your leaning, you may also acquire two war assets to help in your Galaxy at War rating by speaking with Diana Allers and Khalisah al-Jilani.

ITEM REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Medi-Gel Capacity

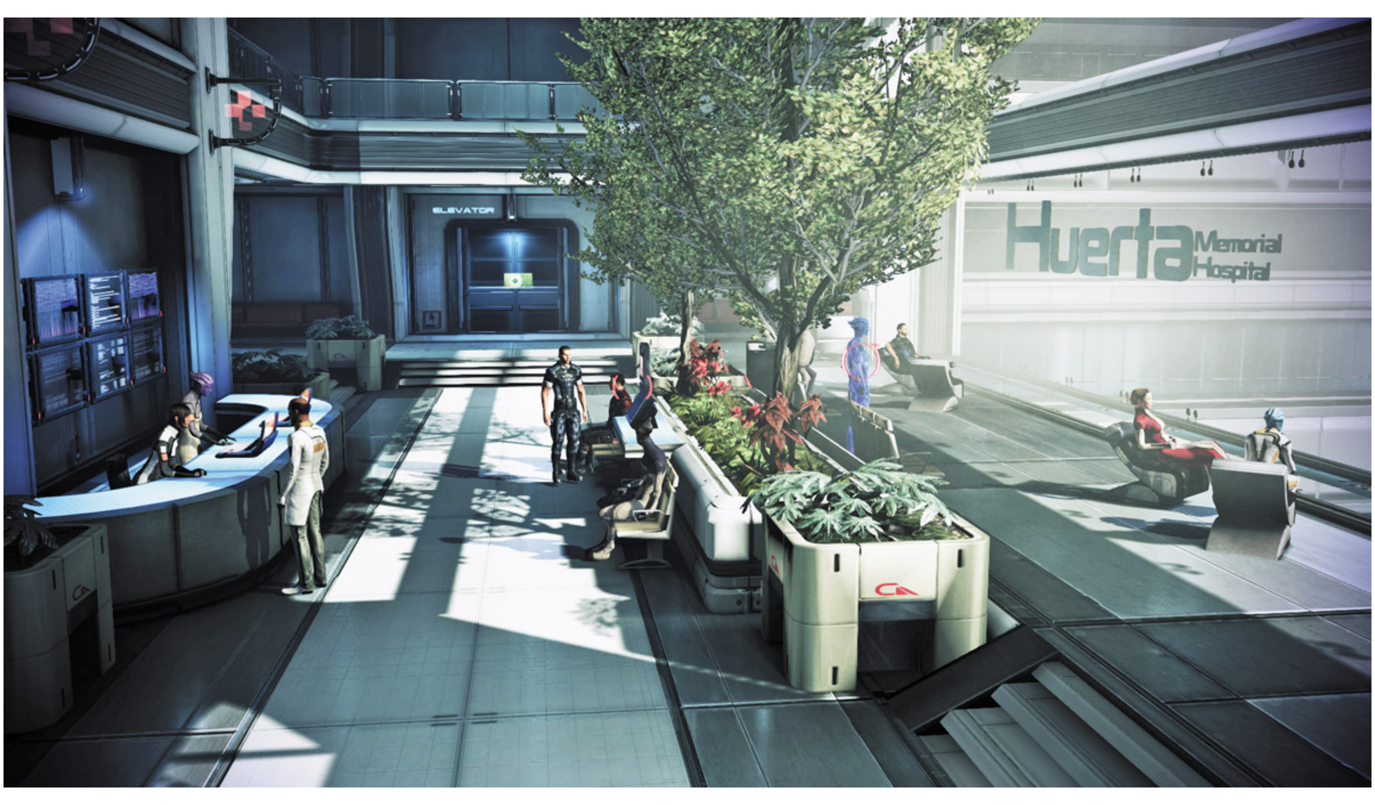
TM88—Peruvian Whiskey

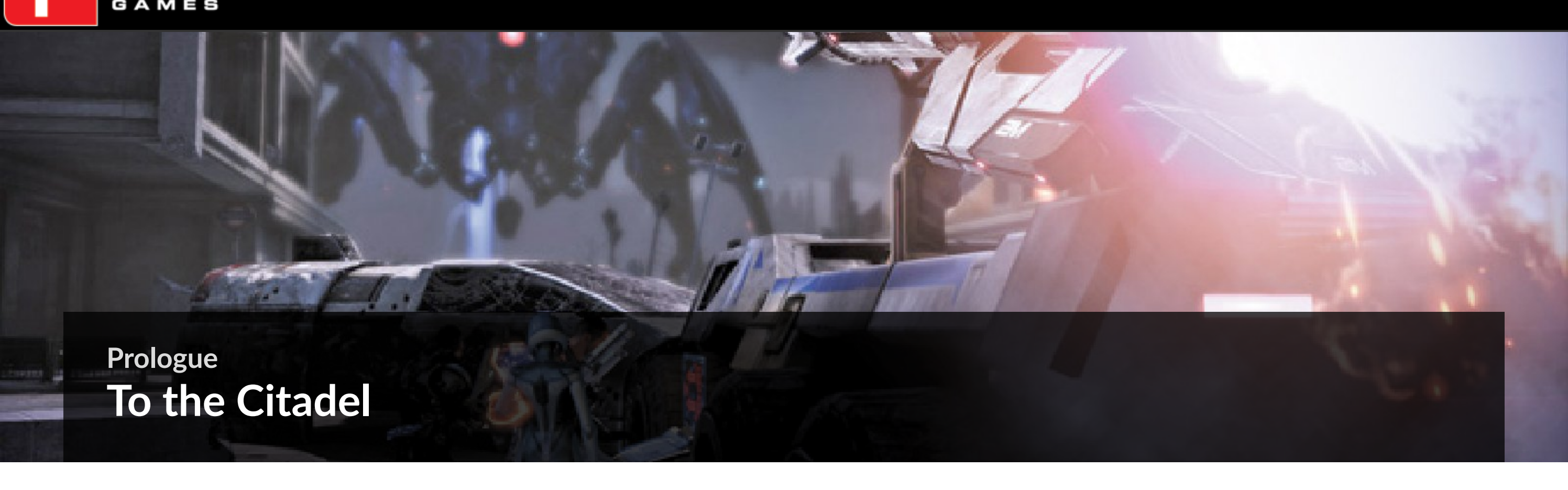
NOTE

There are many items to purchase in the hospital as gifts and these vary depending on whether Ashley or Kaidan was injured.

TIP

Use the area map upon first arriving and getting control in the Citadel (labeled map in the Citadel maps section).





Prologue

To the Citadel

Immediately after your escape from the Mars research facility, you're contacted by Admiral Hackett. The information you managed to obtain yielded impressive results.

Most notably, the information revealed plans for a Prothean device that seems to be capable of massive amounts of damage.

However, with little else to go on, your initial mission remains: reach the Citadel and speak with the Council to enlist the help of the other Citadel Space planets.

You have nowhere else to go at the moment, and there is the matter of your third squad member's current critical condition after his or her encounter with the Cerberus synthetic.

NOTE

You have no choice but to go to the Citadel immediately following "Priority: Mars." The ending cutscene finishes with you arriving at the Citadel ready to meet with the Council. You don't have to go directly to the Council, of course, but to progress the game and story, you must speak with them regarding the Reaper invasion of Earth.

Upon landing at the Citadel, you're greeted by a familiar friend.Captain Bailey of C-Sec has been recently promoted to commander and is happy to see you back on the Citadel. Commander Bailey suggests you stop by the Huerta Memorial Hospital to check on the condition of your injured comrade.

TIP

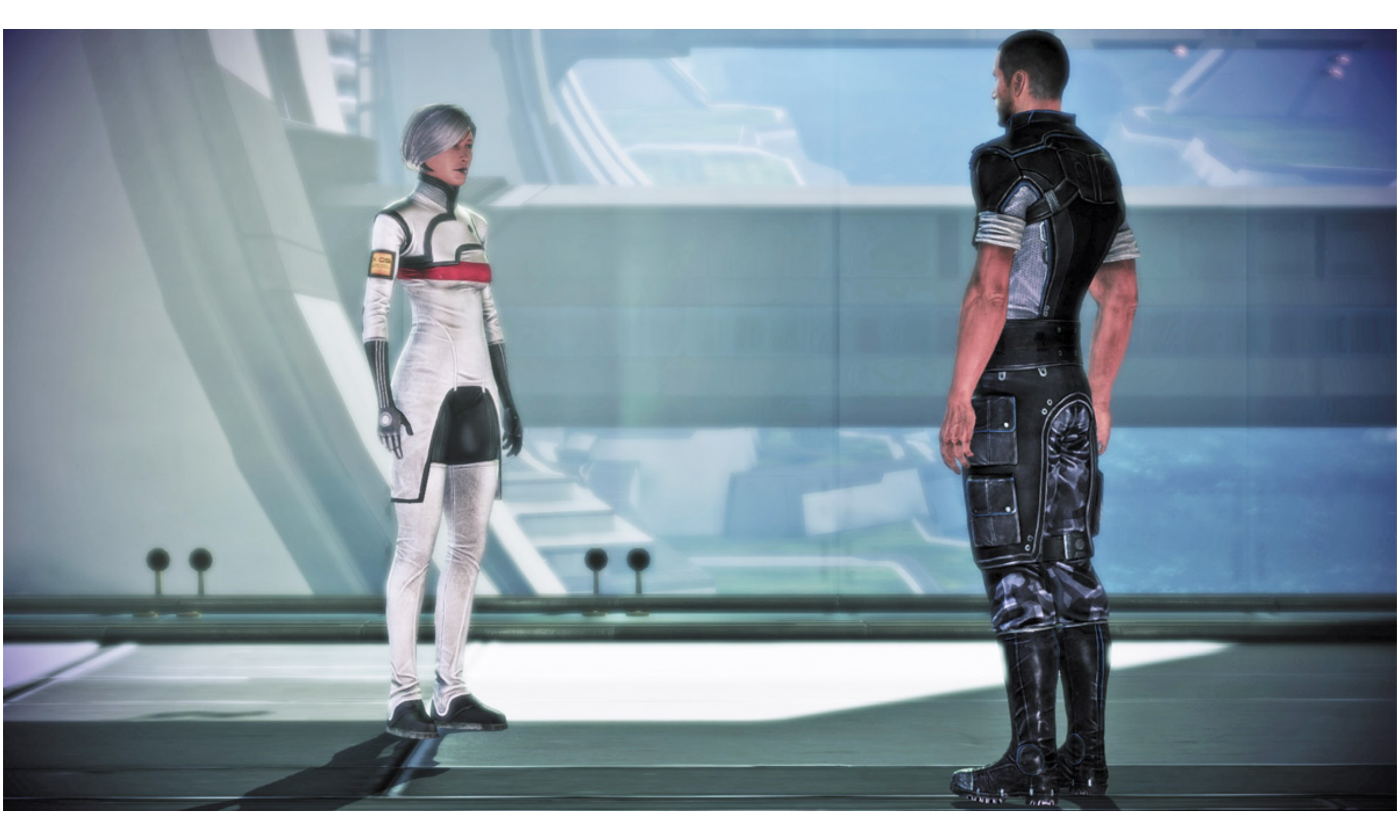
If you agree to go to the hospital when Commander Bailey suggests it, you'll accrue Paragon points.

However, if you choose to get straight to business and instead go to meet with Councilor Udina, then you'll forgo any Paragon points, even if you change your mind and go to the hospital first. What matters is what you tell Commander Bailey at this point.

If you'd like to keep the critical path moving, jump to the "A Favor for a Favor" (next guide section) header and continue from there. If you'd like to explore the Citadel first, continue reading.

HUERTA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

RECRUIT A DOCTOR



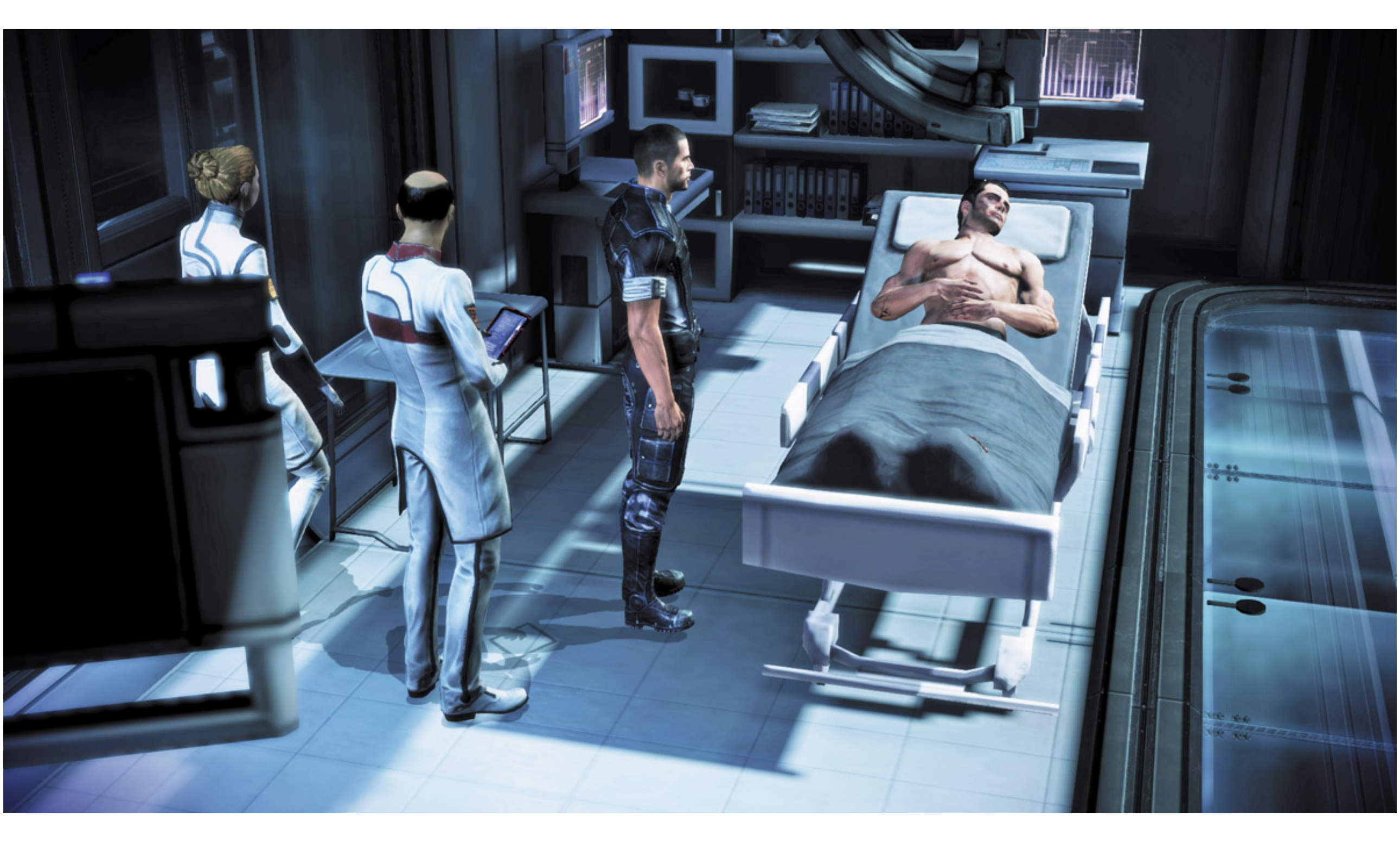
Upon arriving at the hospital, you run into two doctors: Dr. Michel and Dr. Chakwas. Regardless of who you speak with first, your conversation is directed to Dr. Chakwas. Here you have a critical decision to make. You can either recruit Dr. Chakwas for the Normandy or, despite her pleading, ask her to stay at the Citadel and aid in the efforts.

If you choose to recruit her, she'll go to the Normandy and you'll gain a few points of Reputation and the aid of an old trusted friend on the Normandy.

However, if you choose to recruit Dr. Michel, you'll gain Reputation points for asking Dr. Chakwas to remain behind (you must do this first before recruiting Dr. Michel); you'll also trigger a Paragon/Renegade decision and gain a few bonus Reputation points for recruiting Dr. Michel to join you.

Better yet, by asking Dr. Chakwas to remain behind, you'll acquire a new war asset for your Galaxy at War rating.

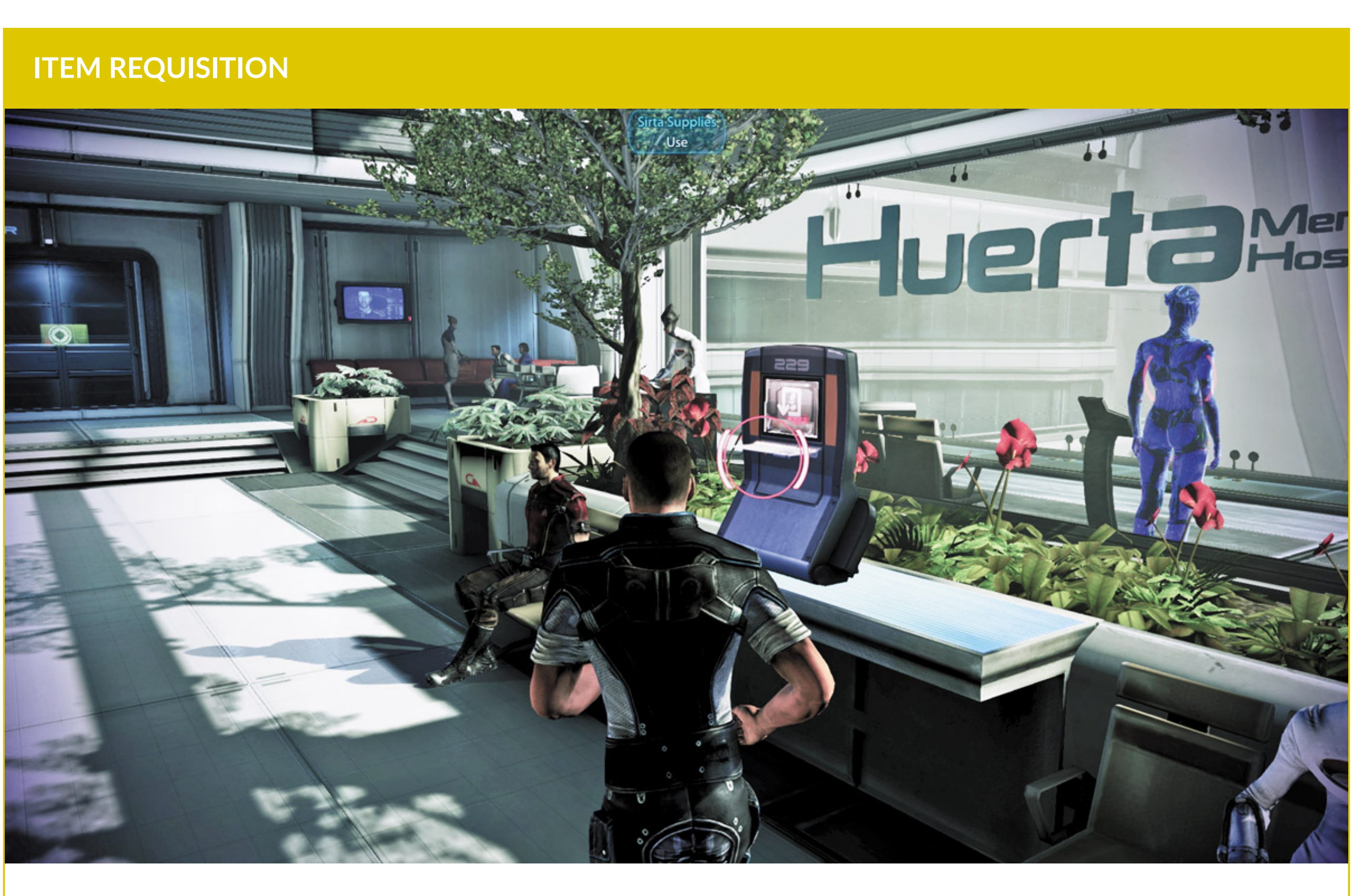
VISIT YOUR INJURED SQUAD MEMBER



Once you've recruited a doctor, visit your squad member's room to give him or her some words of encouragement. Neither Ashley nor Kaidan will respond, as their injuries are pretty severe, but you'll get a dialogue choice that can result in positive Reputation point gains.

Give your fallen member a pep talk (or a commander's cold, hard speech), then exit the room. Now that you've visited your squad member and recruited a doctor, you can return to the Citadel Embassies.

ITEM REQUISITION



On the way out of the hospital, stop by the Sirta Supplies kiosk and purchase the **Medi-Gel Capacity** upgrade for 3,000 credits.

It's still early in your adventure, and you'll need to carry plenty of Medi-Gel (especially in higher difficulty settings) to keep your squadmates alive.

If you'd like to pick up the **TM88-Peruvian Whiskey** , you might as well do that too. After all, it's only 1,000 credits.

TIP

If the injured squad member is Ashley, there will be a range of gifts available, from candy to books of poetry. However, you may only purchase a single gift.

After purchasing one, the other choices are no longer available. The correct gift for her is the Collected Alfred Tennyson.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

Ashley's correct gift is a reference to her relationship dialogs in *Mass Effect 1* .

NOTE

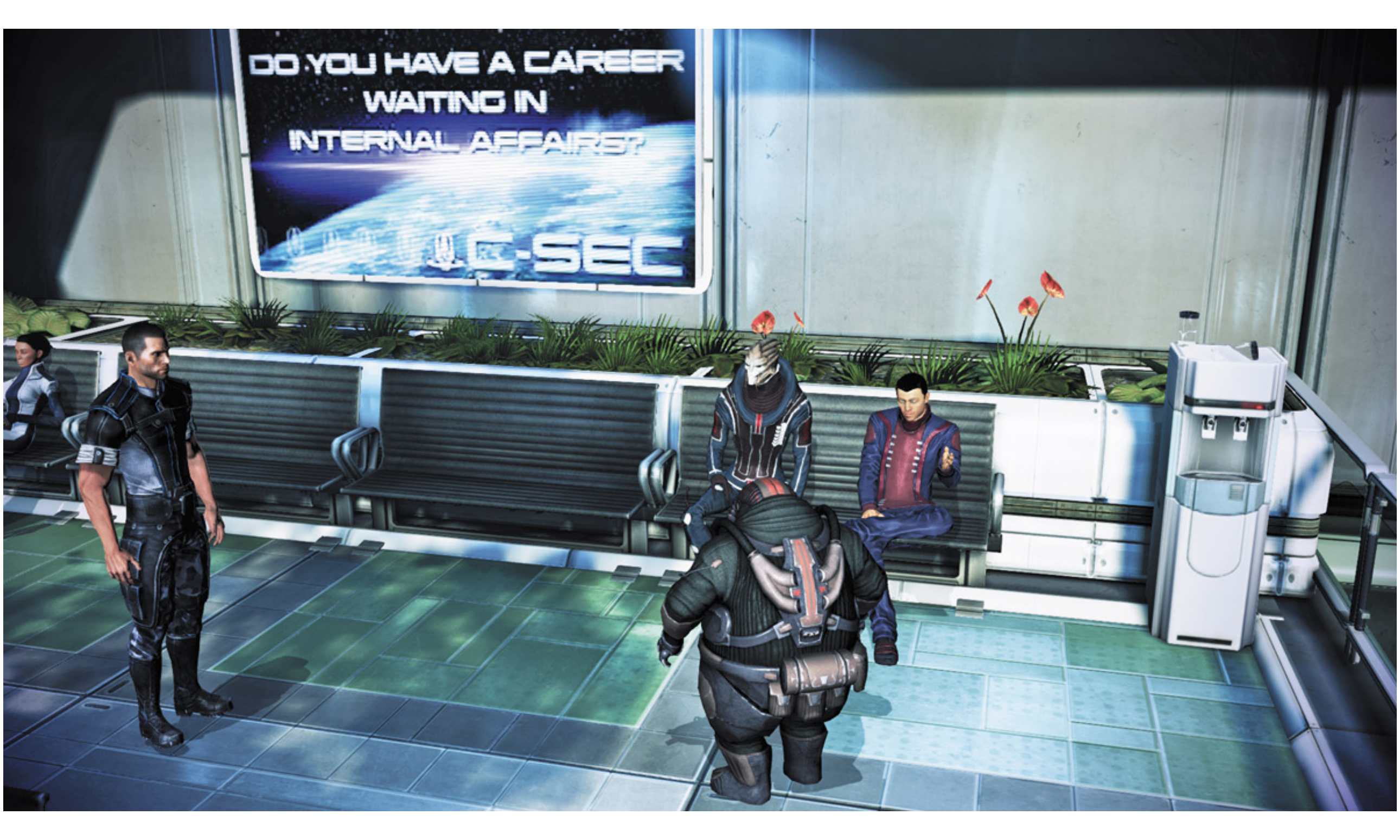
The Peruvian Whiskey is only available if Kaidan is the injured squad member. In this case, this will count as the correct gift for Kaidan.

He will not take the gift from you at this time and should you choose to wait, it will still be available for purchase if you come back to see him again.

At some point you will be able to have a conversation and give a gift to your injured squadmate. A correct gift for either Ashley or Kaidan will earn you points in the relationship. An incorrect gift for Ashley will gain you no benefit.

CITADEL EMBASSY

QUEST PICKUP—SHRIKE ABYSSAL: PROTHEAN OBELISK



At any point during your visit to the Citadel, walk up to the trio (turian, human, and volus) in the far left corner of the Embassies.

You'll overhear the volus diplomat speaking about a Prothean Obelisk and you'll pick up a new mission in the Shrike Abyssal.

For information on how to complete this quest, go to the "Hub Mission" chapter and search for the "Shrike Abyssal: Prothean Obelisk" mission (See *Hub Missions* Section).

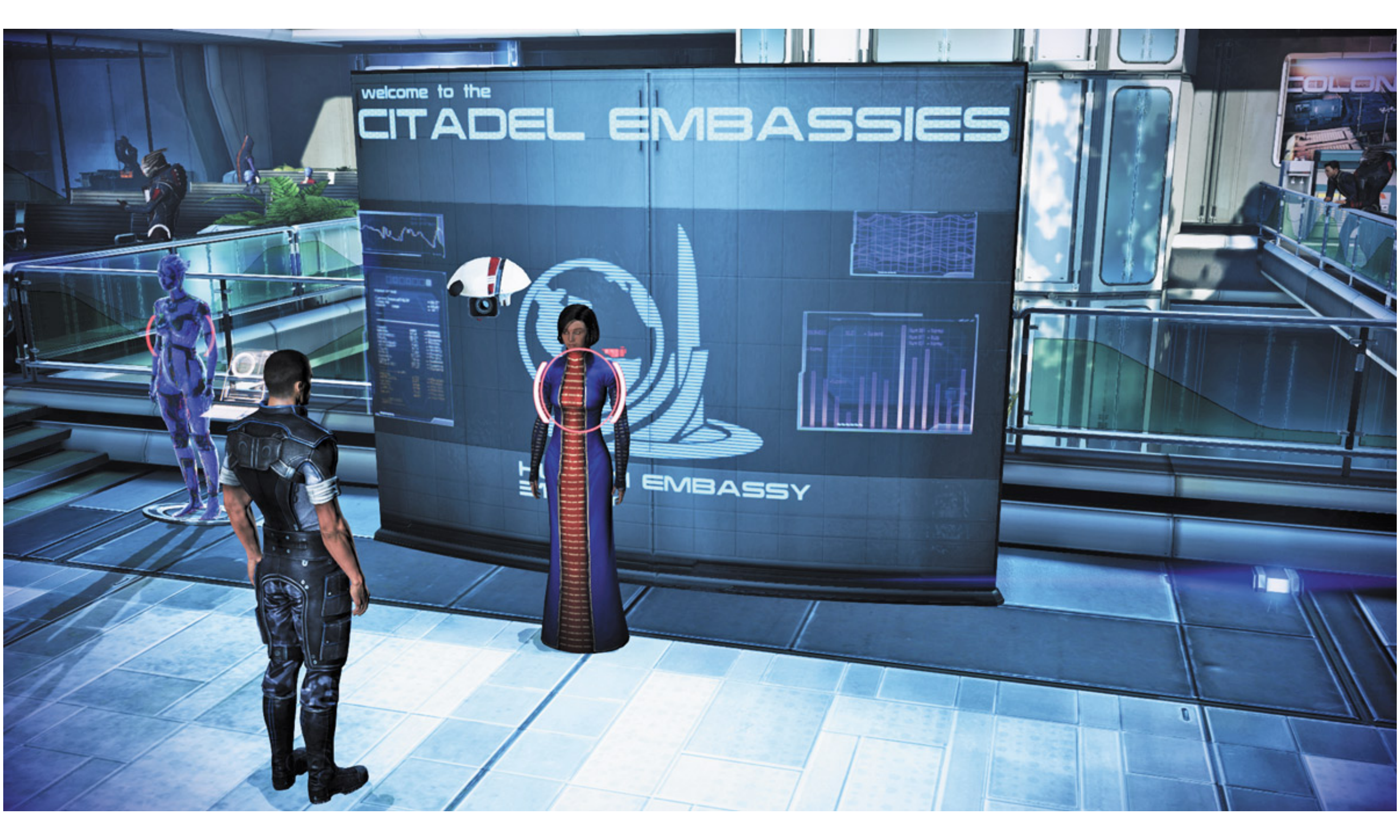
VISIT COMMANDER BAILEY

Prior to speaking with the Council, stop by Commander Bailey's office to speak with him for a bit. When you arrive, you interrupt a conversation between him and Alliance News Network reporter Khalisah al-Jilani.

Bailey doesn't have the brightest outlook on things, but this conversation can serve two purposes:

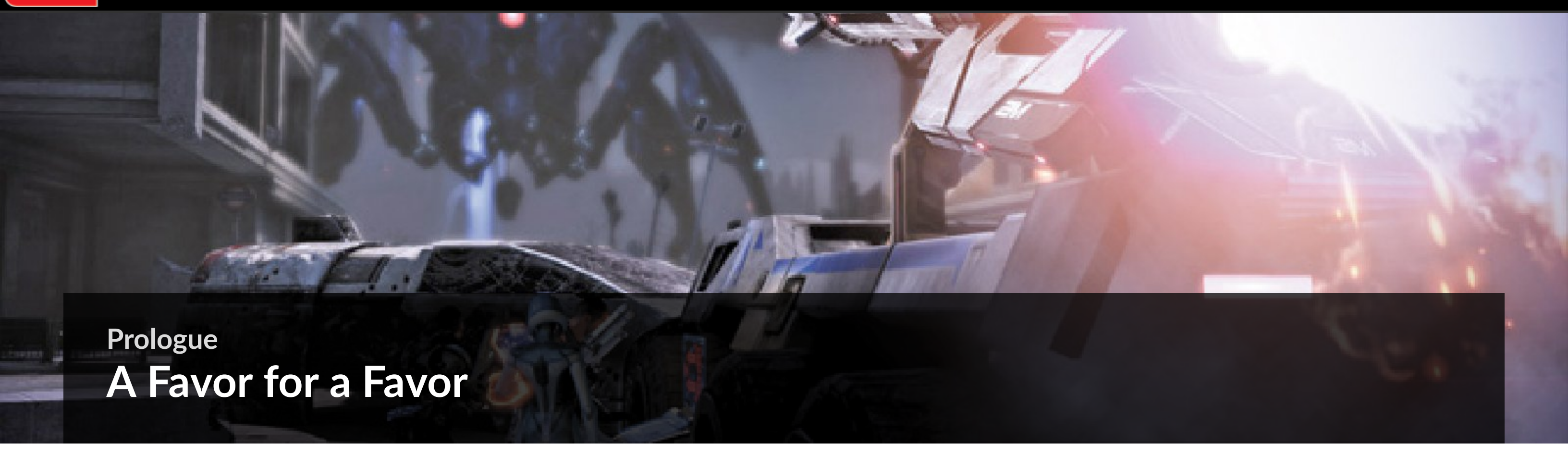
(1) You can gain Paragon/Renegade points, depending on how sternly you steer the conversation, and (2) you'll possibility trigger a conversation with Khalisah later.

SPEAK TO KHALISAH AL-JILANI



After speaking with Commander Bailey for the first time, exit his office and approach the elevator. There, next to Avina, the Citadel VI (virtual intelligence), you'll find Khalisah. She's eager for an interview, so stop and speak with her.

Early into the conversation, you'll be given the chance to trigger a Renegade interrupt (two, actually, if you take the first). However, if you ignore this choice, you can later take a Paragon decision. If you do, you'll acquire Khalisah as a war asset as well.



After Commander Bailey greets you at the Citadel entrance, you can go to Councilor Udina's office to speak about the current situation on Earth.

There you're met by Udina and the rest of the Council. Though they're sympathetic to your pleas to help Earth, their planets are under Reaper threat as well.

Even though it feels like a defeat, the turian Ambassador does extend an offer. The turian Primarch is currently stuck on Palaven, as he didn't get out in time.

If you can rescue the Primarch, he's just the type of man who will help defend Earth long enough for the Prothean weapon to be completed. A favor for a favor.

Your next stop is on Palaven's moon, Menae. However, even though they can't help you right away, the Council does reinstate you as a Spectre, granting you use of the Spectre Console and Spectre Requisitions consoles in the room next to Commander Bailey's.

Depending on how you steer the conversation with the Council, you can gain either Paragon or Renegade points. Keep the conversation positive and supportive and you'll gain Paragon points. If you're stubborn, angry, and uncooperative, you'll get Renegade points.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

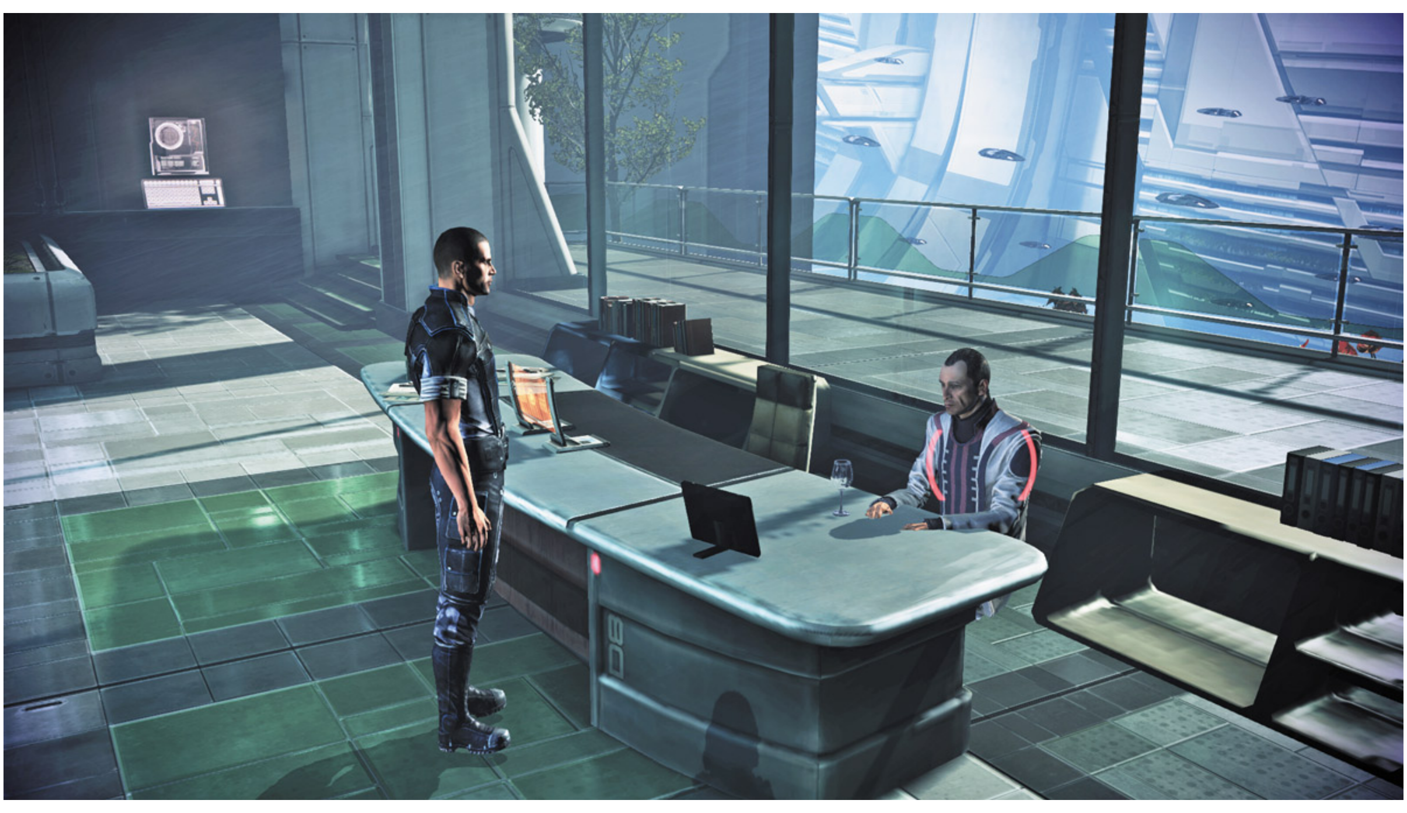
If you were already reinstated as a Spectre during *Mass Effect 2* , then the Council simply upholds your Spectre status during this conversation.

TIP

Take a minute to check out the Spectre room where you can poke around the Spectre consoles and visit the shooting range.

You can also use the weapon bench to modify your current weapons and try them out on the three moving targets nearby.

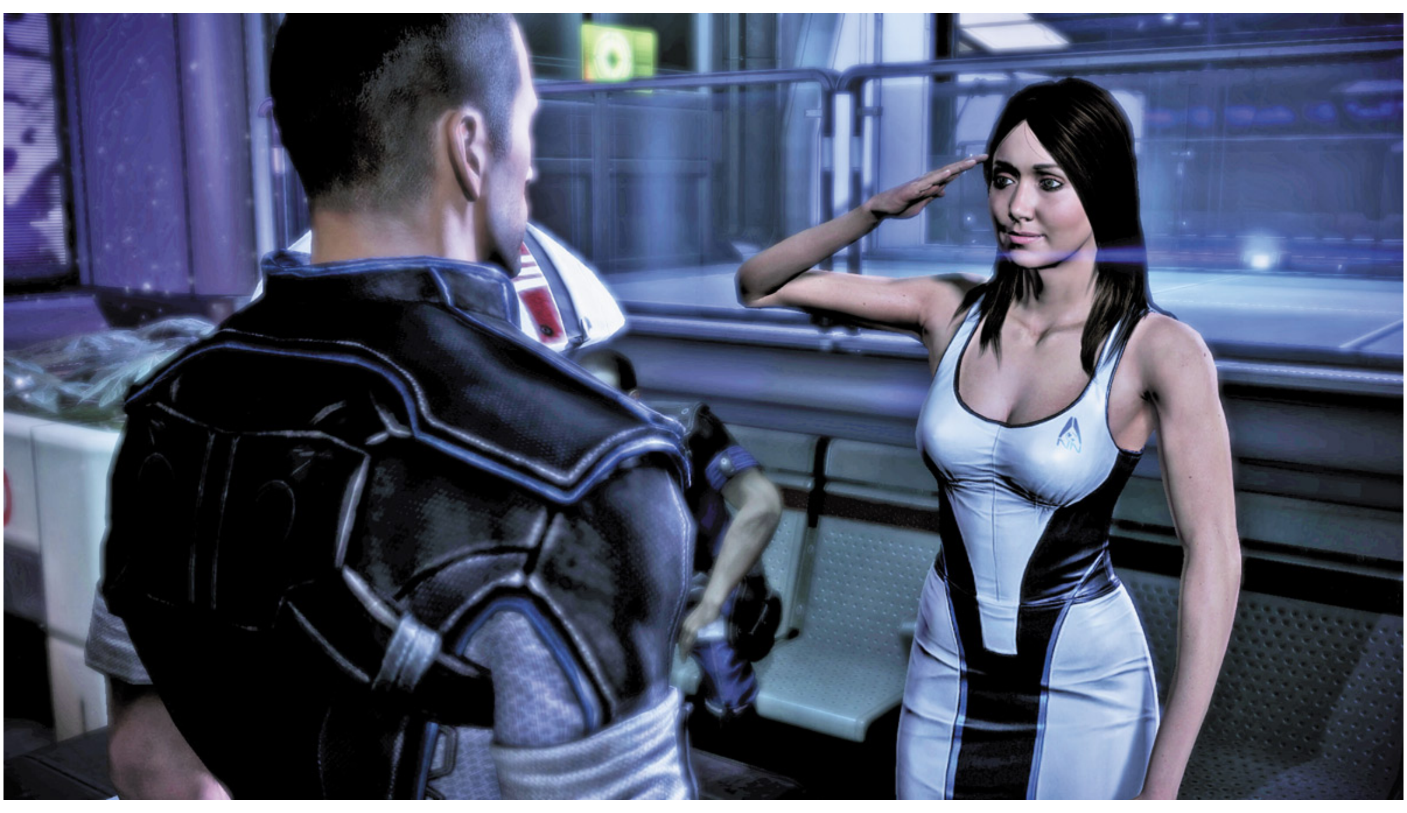
SPEAK WITH COUNCILOR UDINA



After speaking to the Council, you can speak with Councilor Udina again to get a better read on his situation. Use the "Investigate" dialogue option to learn more about him and what has happened in the last few months.

NORMANDY DOCK: BAY 24D

SPEAK WITH DIANA ALLERS

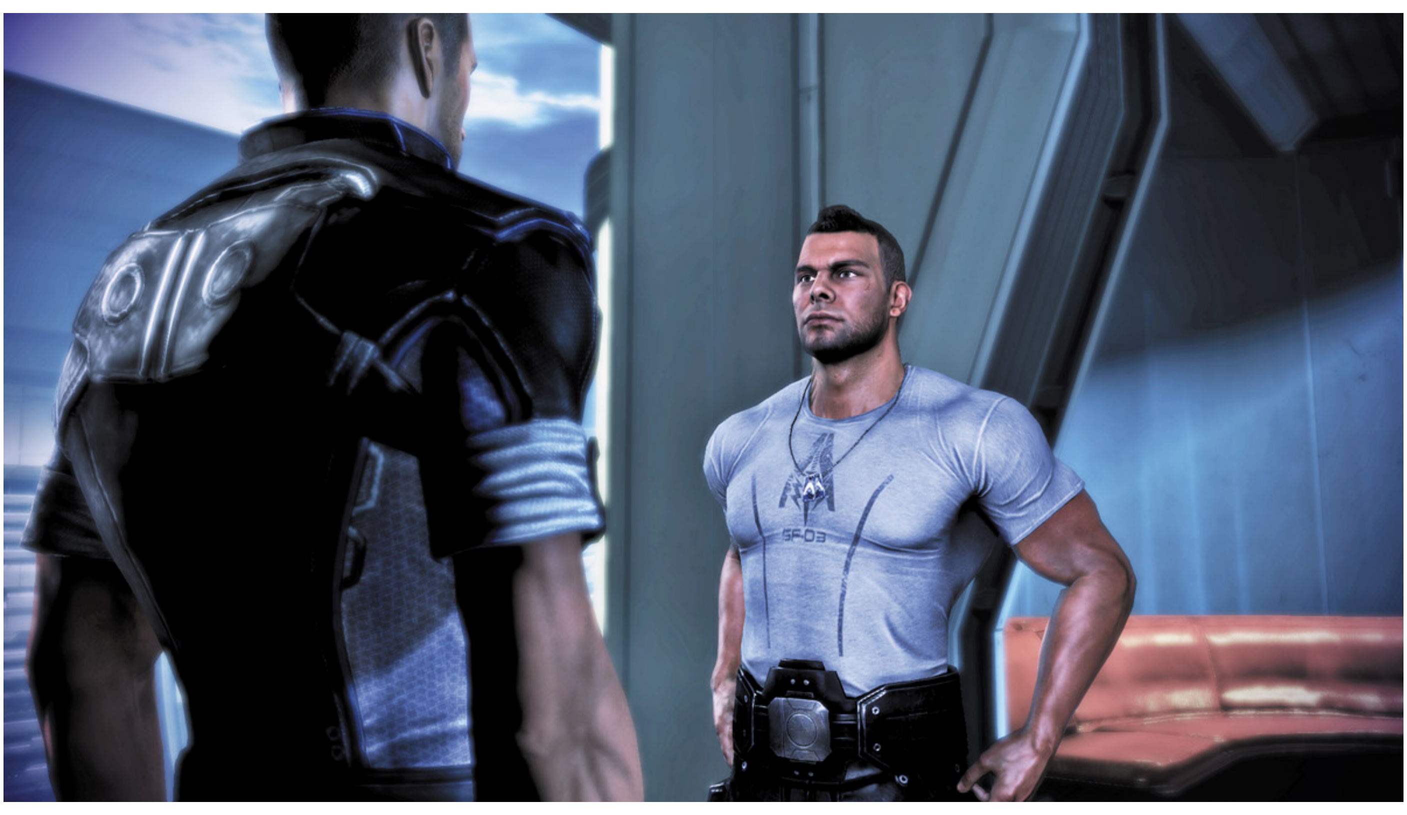


Once you've spoken to the Council and Councilor Udina, you're free to go down to the docking bay. There you'll find Alliance News Network correspondent Diana Allers.

Speak with her briefly, then allow her to join you on the Normandy as a war asset.

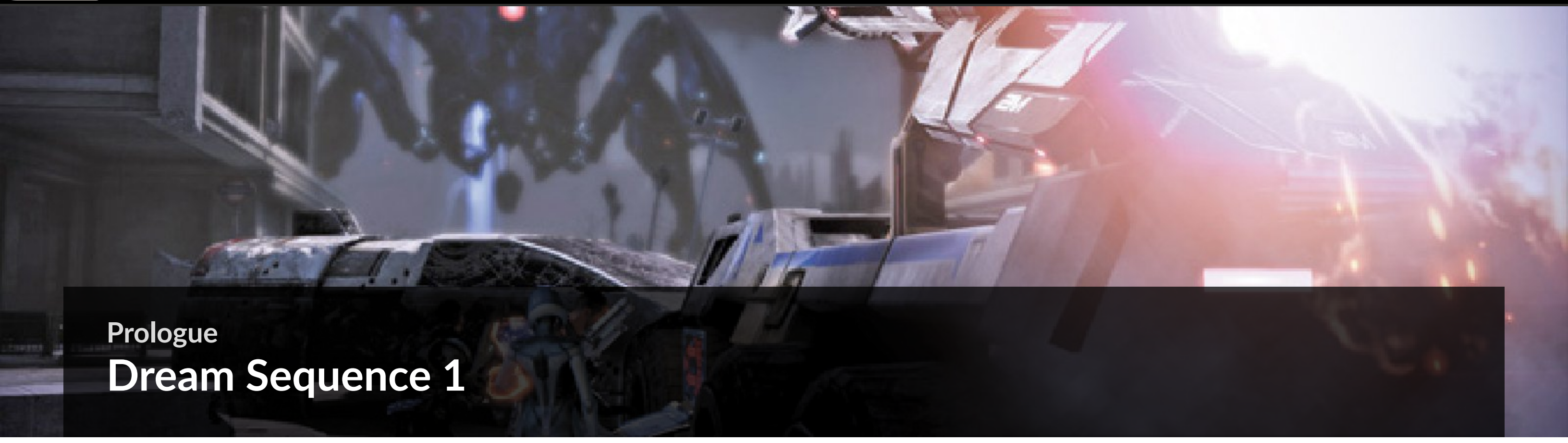
CITADEL EMBASSY

SPEAK WITH JAMES



Before departing the Citadel on your next mission, return to the Embassies to find James staring out of the window just left of the elevator. Speak with him to get his view on things.

You won't get any Paragon or Renegade points, but you'll accrue a few Reputation points for speaking with him. Once you've done so, you can leave the Citadel.



Prologue

Dream Sequence 1

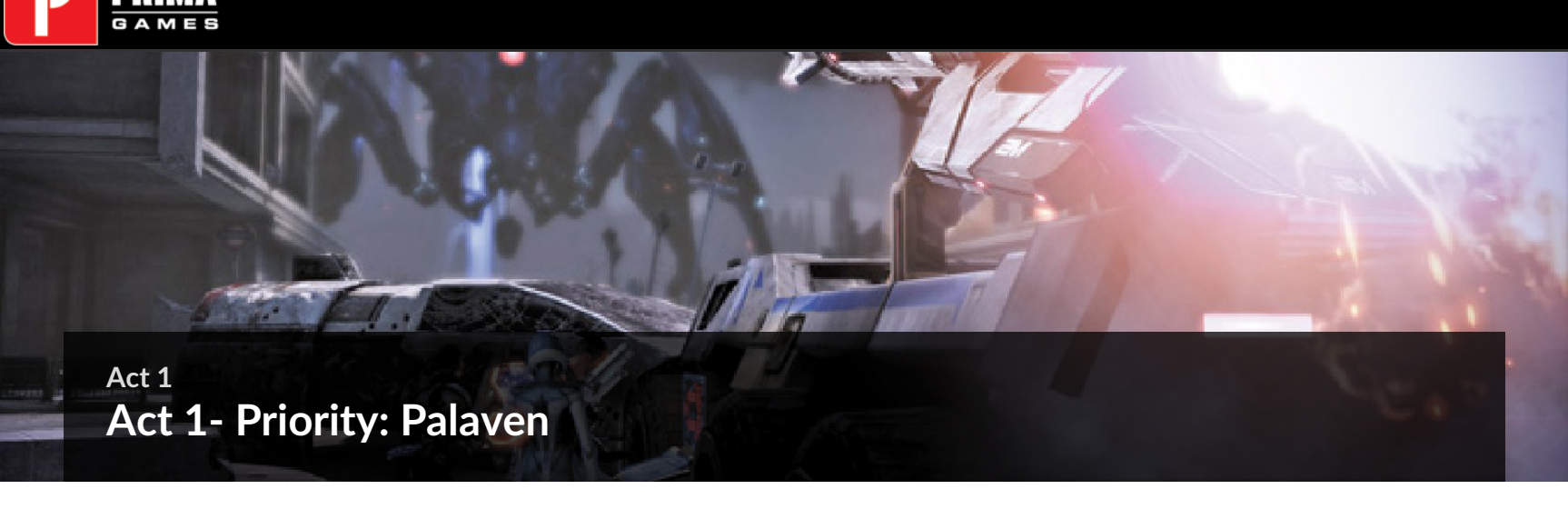
After returning to the Normandy, you have a rough night of sleep. Your dreams are dominated by haunting visions of the little boy left behind on Earth as the Reapers attacked.

Even though you have control of this sequence, you don't have to do much. Simply follow the child as he runs from place to place until the dream ends.

WELCOME BACK TO THE NORMANDY

The following morning, you meet Liara and your new Comms Specialist, Samantha Traynor. Traynor gives you a quick rundown of the new Normandy ship, including all of its critical systems, and leaves you to speak to Admiral Hackett over vid-com.

Every dialogue choice between Liara and Hackett culminates in a Paragon/Renegade point calculation, so keep this in mind as you respond to their comments and questions.



Act 1

Act 1- Priority: Palaven

The Citadel Council has called a war summit that presents an opportunity for the Alliance to request help building the Crucible. Unfortunately, Primarch Fedorian is caught in the Reaper attack on Palaven. Rescue the turian Primarch from Palaven's moon.

MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: The majority of this mission takes place on the surface of Menae, Palaven's moon. The surface of Menae is nothing more than jagged rock.

The turian forces have been spread thin across the moon, forcing them to set up makeshift command stations wherever they can.

The wide-open areas of the moon's surface allow all military classes to do well here. Everyone from the Sentinel to the Engineer can find creative ways to complete this mission with minimal fuss.

The toughest mission segment will be dispatching two Brutes at once, while fending off Marauders and Cannibals. Use the wide-open area to your advantage and sprint away if you need to create some distance from the enemies.

Consequence Overview: Nearly all integral conversation during this mission results in Paragon/Renegade points. Most importantly, however, are the conversations you have before the mission on the Normandy.

Take this time to begin developing relationships and even inviting key members of the crew up to your quarters for conversations.

During the mission, you'll interact with several high-ranking turian figures. Your conversations with them will carry weight, so keep your responses in line with your desired outcome.

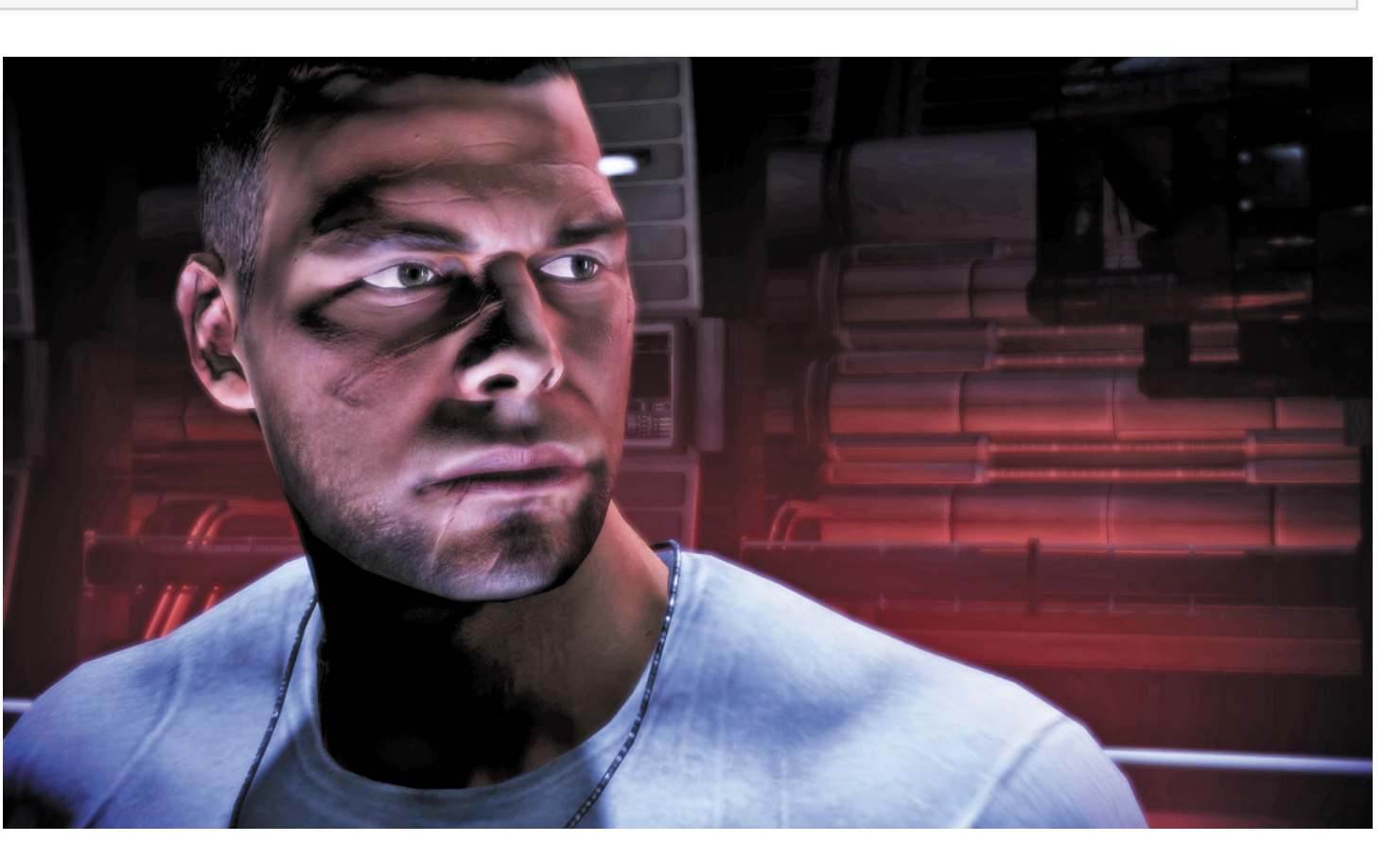
If you want to lean toward Paragon, then keep the conversations positive and cooperative. Renegade players should get straight to the point and leave all tact out on the battlefield.

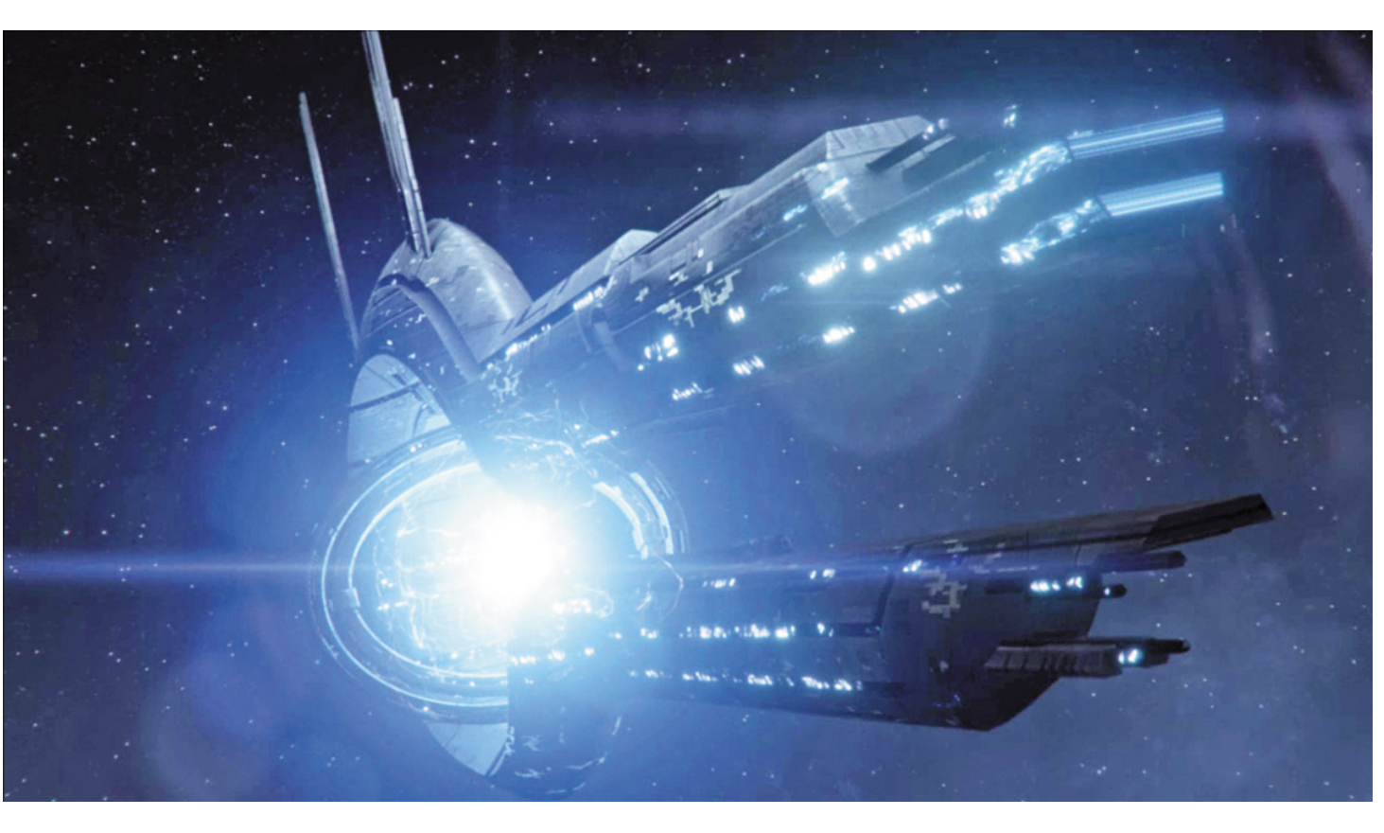
ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Armax Arsenal Shoulder Guard	Normandy SR-1
Assault Rifle Magazine Upgrade I	Pistol Magazine Upgrade I
Assault Rifle Piercing Mod I	Pistol Piercing Mod I
Datapad	Salvage
Destiny Ascension Model	Sniper Rifle Enhanced Scope II
Hahne-Kedar Greaves	Sniper Rifle Spare Ammo I
M-27 Scimitar	Sovereign Model Ship
M-97 Viper Sniper Rifle	Turian Cruiser
Med Kit	

WAR ASSETS

ASSET	BECOMES AVAILABLE	CONDITION NEEDED
Alliance Engineering Corps	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.
103rd Marine Division	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.
Admiral Mikhailovich	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.
Alliance First Fleet	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.
Alliance Third Fleet	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.
Alliance Fifth Fleet	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.
Alliance Frigate Normandy SR-2	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.
Upgraded Thanix	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	Import *Mass Effect 2* save with an upgraded cannon for the Normandy
Upgraded Heavy Ship Armor	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	Import *Mass Effect 2* save with upgraded armor for the Normandy
Upgraded Shield	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	Import *Mass Effect 2* save with upgraded shields for the Normandy
Mineral Resources	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	Import *Mass Effect 2* save with low level resources
Mineral Resources	Prologue—Priority: Citadel	Import *Mass Effect 2* save with mid level resources





AROUND THE GALAXY

Mission Unlocks
Shrike Abyssal: Prothean Obelisk (see *Hub Missions*)
N7: Cerberus Lab (see *N7 Missions*)

Mission Locks
None

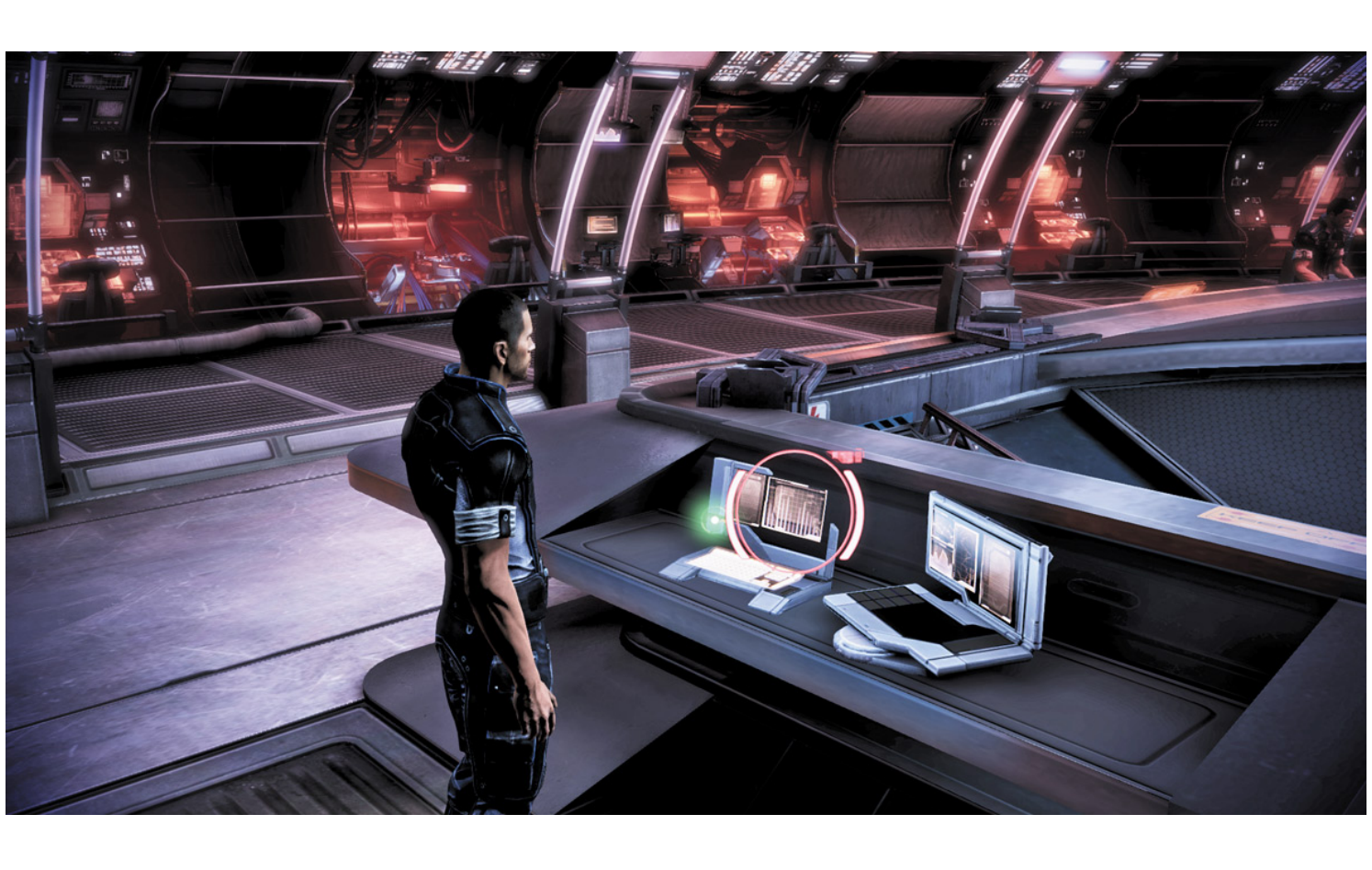
WAR PREPARATIONS

Prior to leaving on your mission, take some time aboard the Normandy to prepare for battle. You can interact with other members of your crew, purchase upgrades, learn about new missions, and even begin developing relationships.

The following suggestions are completely optional but highly recommended if you want to get the most out of your adventure.

If you'd like to get straight to the next mission, skip to the "Rescue the Turian Primarch" (see *Campaign*) section later in the guide.

PRIVATE TERMINAL



Stop by your private terminal to read some e-mail. Everyone from Liara to Admiral Hackett will send you messages here that can trigger private conversation opportunities (where you can develop relationships) and briefings on new missions.

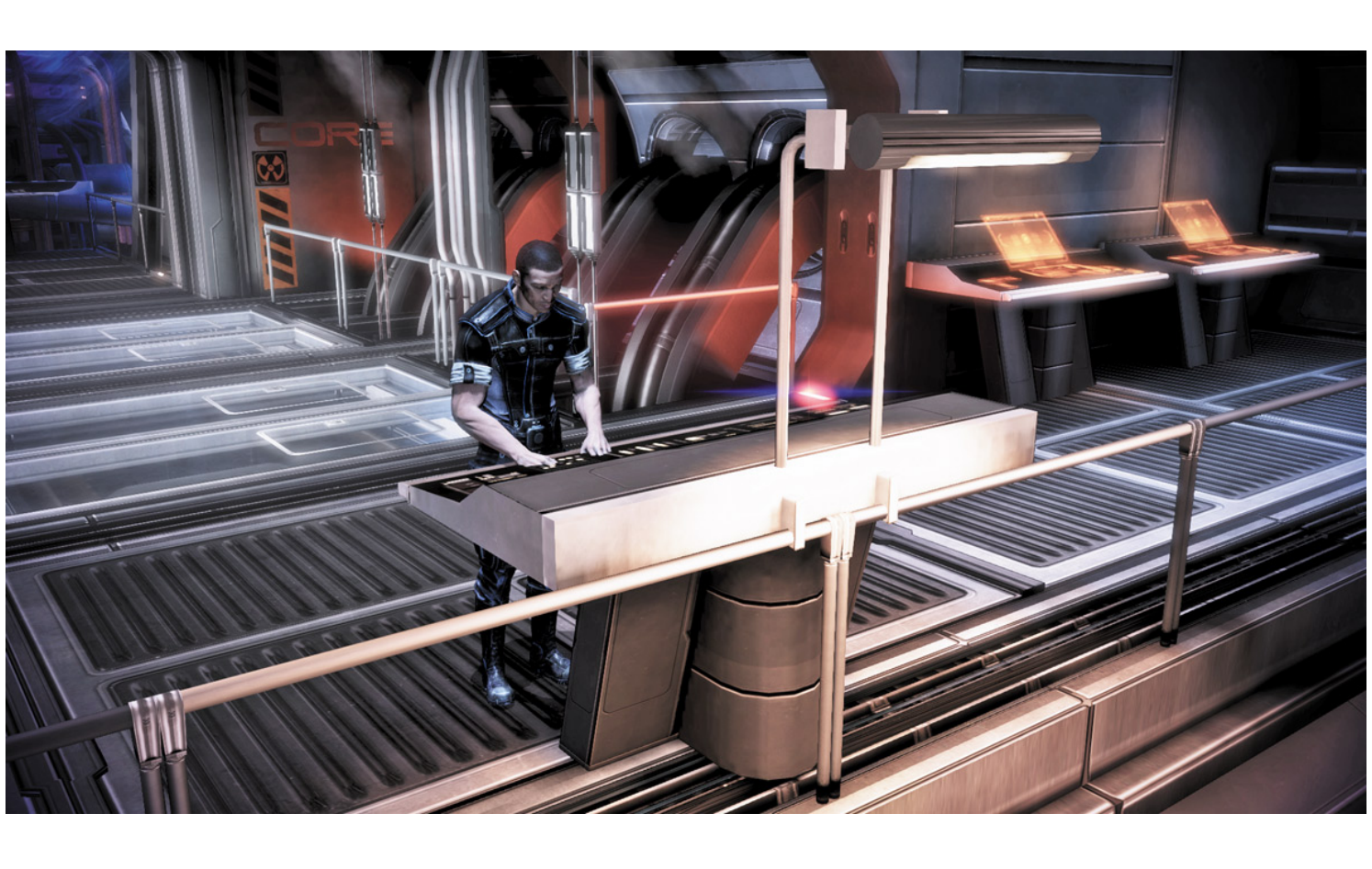
At the moment, Liara has something she'd like to talk to you about. There are also other e-mails available. Check them out.

SPEAK WITH SPECIALIST TRAYNOR

If you want to start developing a relationship with Specialist Traynor, now is a good time to get started.

Speak with her about her background, show interest in her past, and keep the conversation friendly and casual, as opposed to speaking to her like her commanding officer.

SPEAK WITH ENGINEER ADAMS

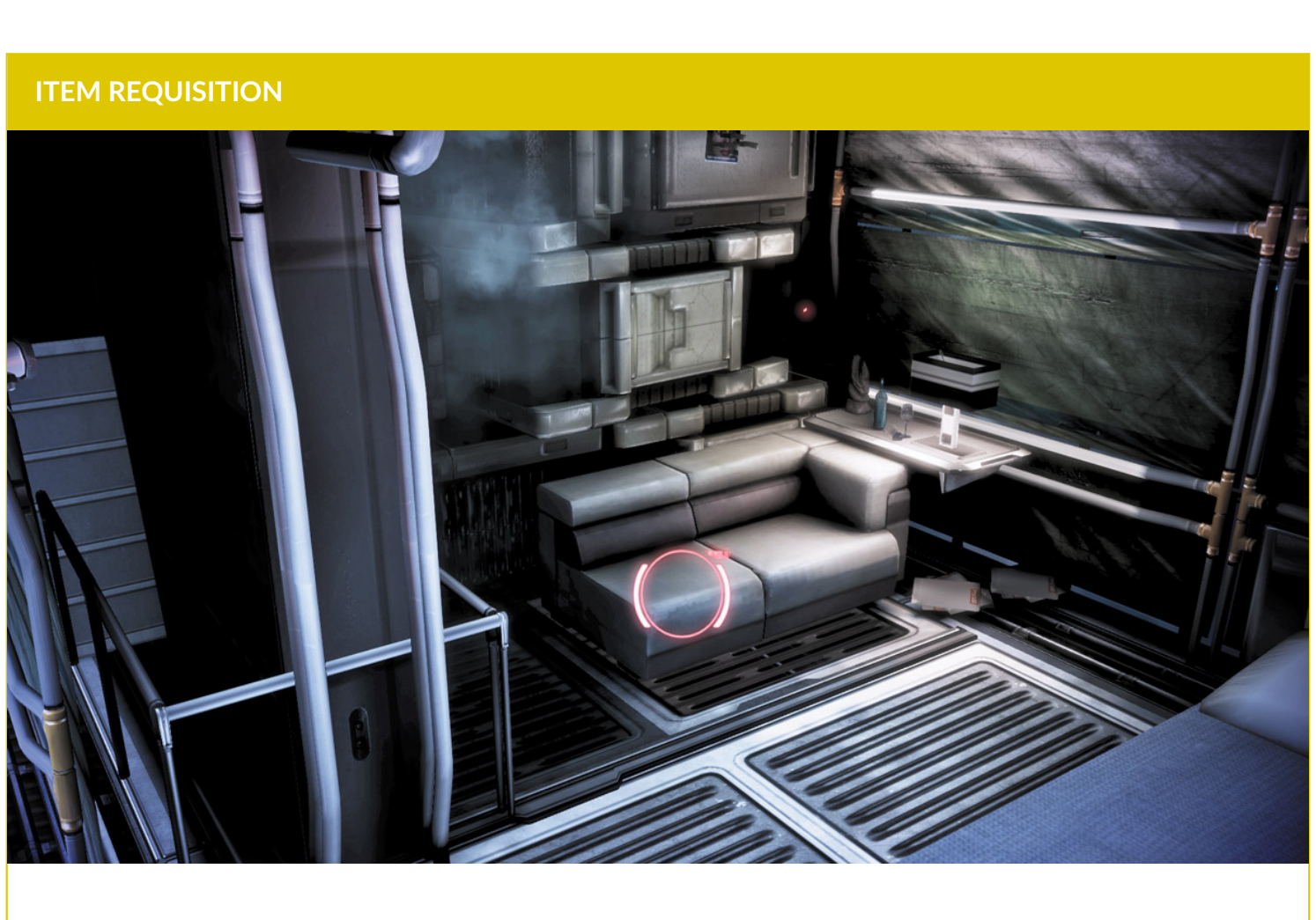


Go down to Engineering and speak with an old familiar face. Engineer Adams is back aboard the Normandy and more than willing to catch up and share his thoughts on the current ship design.

More importantly, he's not shy about sharing his thoughts on your dealings with Cerberus.

Try keeping the conversation friendly and understanding. If you understand his point of view on the Cerberus events, you'll gain Reputation points.

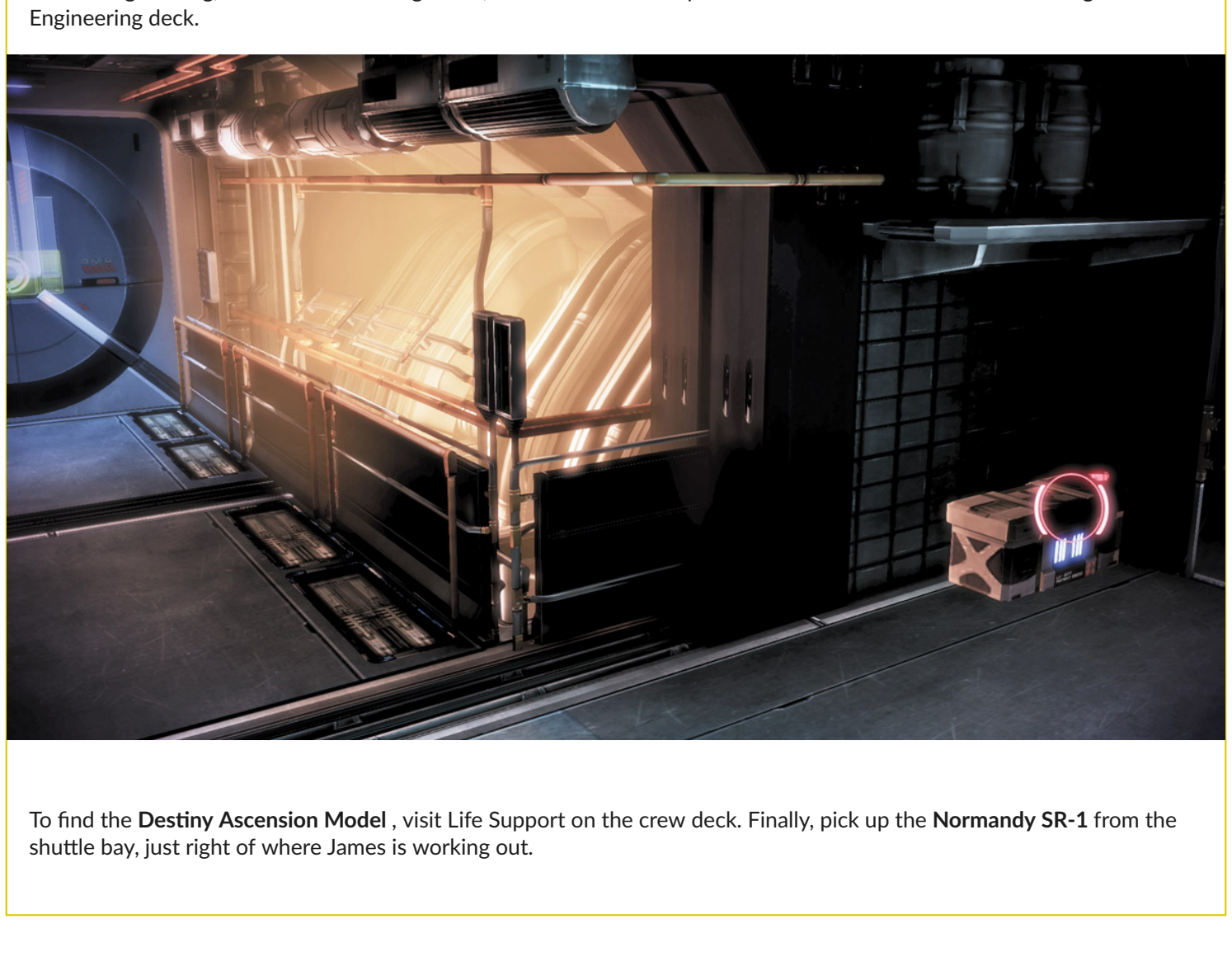
ITEM REQUISITION



While you're down in Engineering, take a minute to explore the lower level, just below where Engineer Adams is stationed.

There, you'll find an item to pick up. Look on the table nearby to find a **Sovereign Model Ship** to display in your private quarters.

Also in Engineering, in the starboard cargo hold, is another model ship—a **Turian Cruiser** . Grab it before leaving the Engineering deck.



To find the **Destiny Ascension Model** , visit Life Support on the crew deck. Finally, pick up the **Normandy SR-1** from the shuttle bay, just right of where James is working out.

SPEAK WITH LIARA

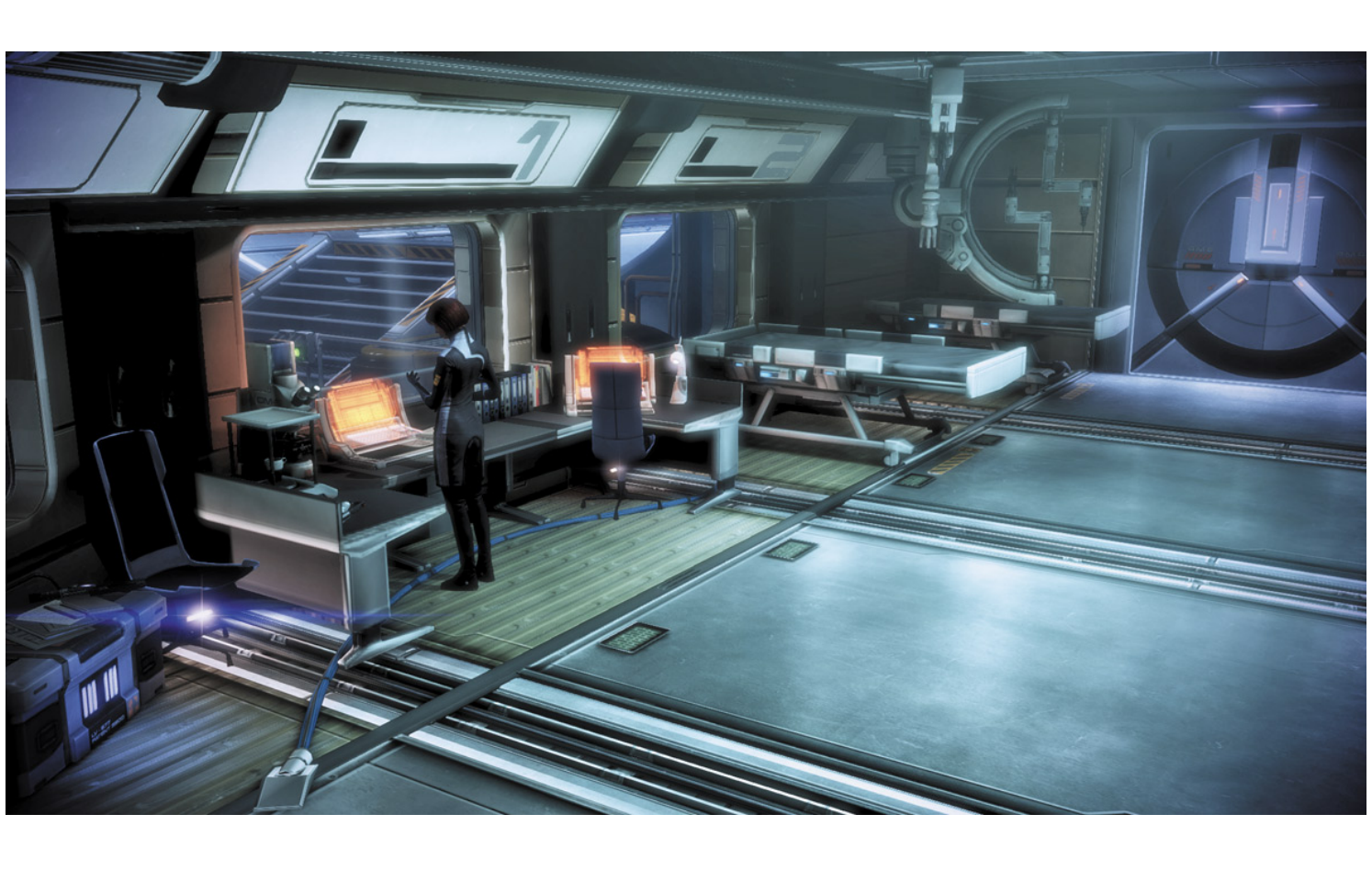
Head to the crew deck to speak with Liara. In her office you'll find a quirky VI, Glyph, manning the intel terminal. When you're done speaking with Glyph, turn to Liara and speak with her.

Liara's office on the Normandy also has the Shadow Terminal where you can access Shadow Broker information. Since she's currently the Shadow Broker, Liara has access to a wealth of information that can help you along your adventure.

You can also call Liara to your private quarters to begin developing a relationship. She'll share with you a project she's working on and asks for your advice.

If you want to encourage romantic feelings, allow her to decide how you are depicted in her project.

SPEAK WITH THE NORMANDY'S DOCTOR



Stop by the medical office on the crew deck to speak with your doctor. The Normandy's doctor has essentially the same interactions available whether you chose Dr. Chakwas or Dr. Michel, so take a minute to speak with the doctor to get a checkup.

The doctor will give you a basic update on how you've progressed so far. If you've leaned toward Paragon, then she'll mention that your scars will continue to heal as long as you stay positive.

However, she'll advise you to lighten up and not be so serious if you've been answering options with Renegade responses. Either way, you'll gain Reputation points.

TIP

If you'd like to acquire a new power or reassign your current ones, this is where you'll need to go. There are two beds in the medical office, one for acquiring new powers and another to respec your class.

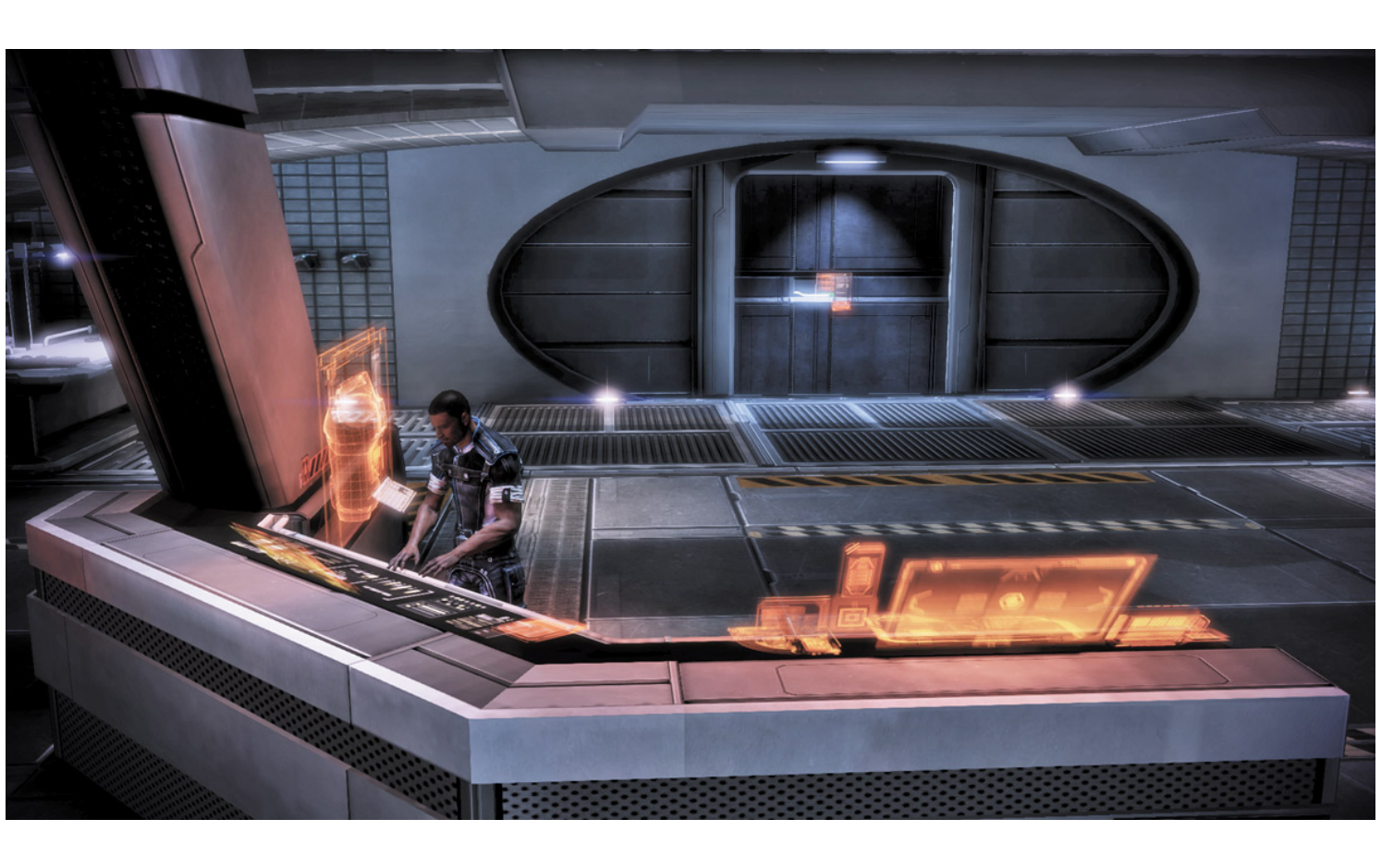
Keep this in mind but don't change anything just yet. It's far too early in your adventure to change things up, and your current powers aren't nearly developed enough to give you a picture of how your class will play out three or four missions from now.

Since both power reassignment and new power acquisitions will come at a cost, it's best to save your credits until you absolutely must make a change.

NOTE

The Cerberus synthetic is still in the AI Core. You can visit her if you want, but you can't do much else with her at the moment.

SPEAK WITH LIEUTENANT CORTEZ



Down in the shuttle bay is Lieutenant Steve Cortez. He's in charge of the requisition consoles in the shuttle bay. Stop by for a minute and speak with him to learn more about how the supply consoles work.

You can also speak with him about his background and his feelings toward current events. If you want to begin developing a relationship with him, ask him about his personal life.

SPEAK WITH JAMES

Also in the shuttle bay is James Vega. He likes to keep a low profile in the lower deck of the ship. This is also the best place for him to work out constantly without any interruptions. Approach and engage him in a conversation.

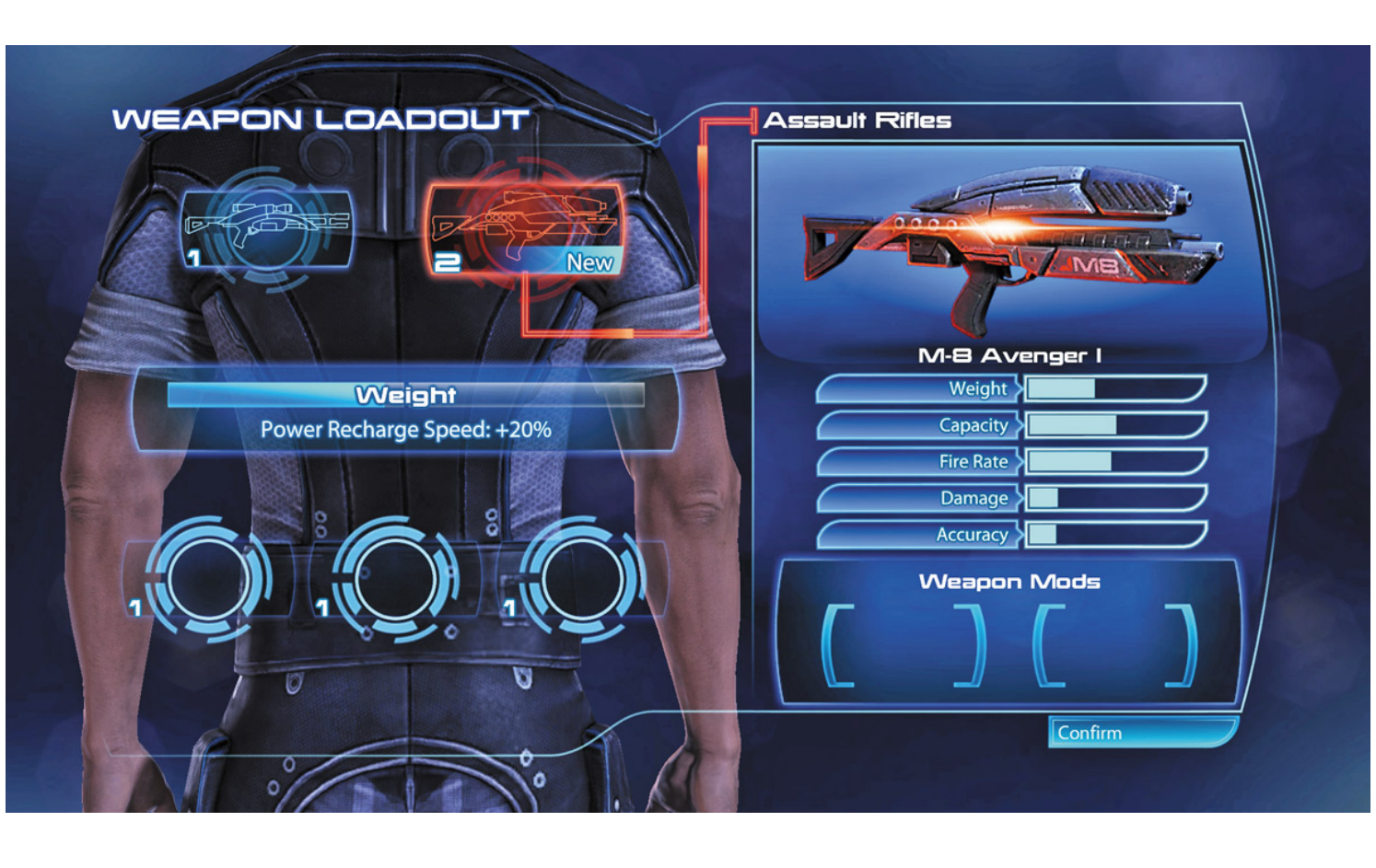
When he asks you to continue the conversation while you "dance" (spar), take him up on his offer.

This sparring session will allow you to gain either some Paragon or Renegade points, but you'll have to react quickly since the Paragon/Renegade decisions occur as sparring moves.

Attack him for Renegade points or carefully defend for Paragon.

End this conversation on a positive note and you'll be able to invite him up to your private quarters for another conversation. He's not interested in you romantically, but he respects you and asks for your professional advice on making career moves.

UPGRADE YOUR EQUIPMENT



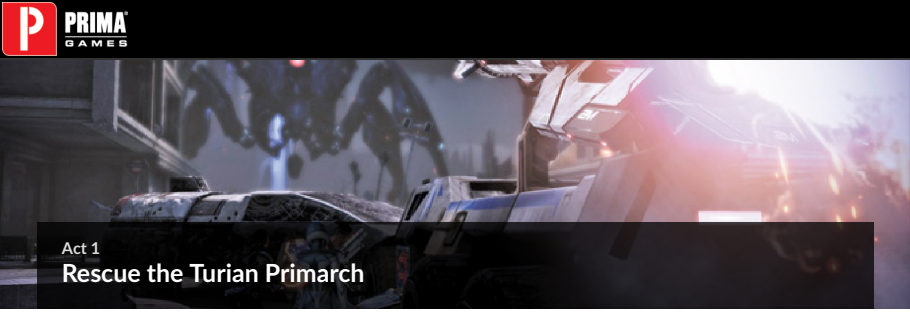
Before embarking on your next mission, we highly suggest that you upgrade your arsenal. Not only do you have several mods available to you, but you can also purchase upgraded versions of your current weapons.

Rather than purchase several upgraded weapons, consider spending credits on upgrading one go-to weapon. If you're a sniper-friendly class, then upgrade your M-92 Mantis up to Level 5.

Soldiers may want to consider investing their credits in a Level 5 M-15 Vindicator.

The choice is yours, but having one fully upgraded weapon early in the game is a benefit, even if you change your mind down the line.

Steve also has the distinction of being the Normandy's shuttle pilot. If you keep things friendly with the lieutenant, you can also accrue some Paragon points.



Act 1

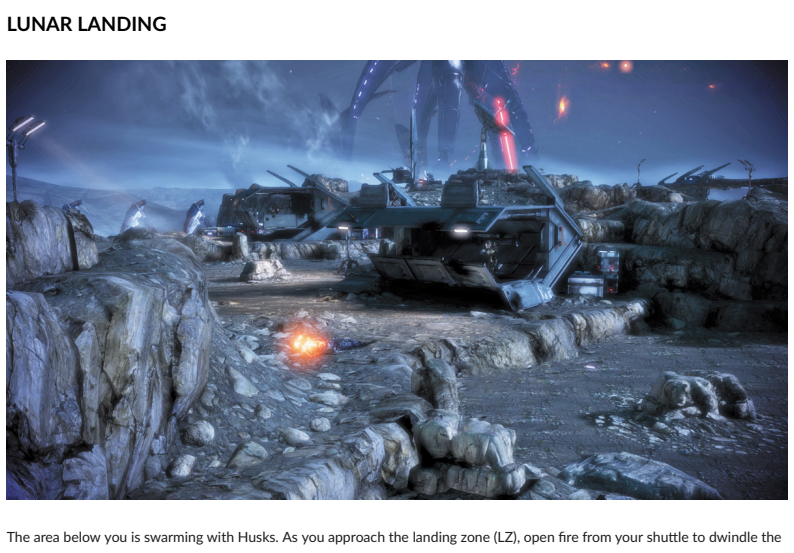
Rescue the Turian Primarch

As you approach the turian moon, you find that the entire region around Palaven is flooded with Reapers.

A careful approach to the moon ensures that you get by safely, but it's clear to see that Palaven's surface is being ravaged just as Earth's was when you left.

Though your mission is on Menae, Palaven's moon, the outcome of this mission will determine whether Palaven will stand a fighting chance against the Reapers.

LUNAR LANDING

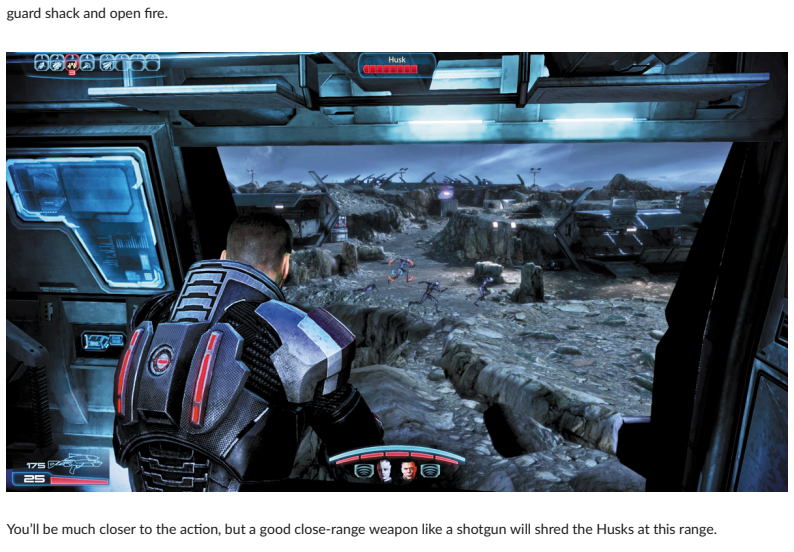


The area below you is swarming with Husks. As you approach the landing zone (LZ), open fire from your shuttle to dwindle the number of Husks there. They're off in the distance, so use a medium- to long-range weapon with good accuracy.

Don't bother using any powers at the moment, since simple weapons fire should suffice for the task. The more Husks you eliminate on the approach, the less you'll have to deal with upon touching down.

Once you've landed, another wave of Husks rush in from the area next to the small turian guard shack.

Either take cover behind one of the small rock mounds and pick them off from afar, or get up against the ridge beneath the guard shack and open fire.



You'll be much closer to the action, but a good close-range weapon like a shotgun will shred the Husks at this range.

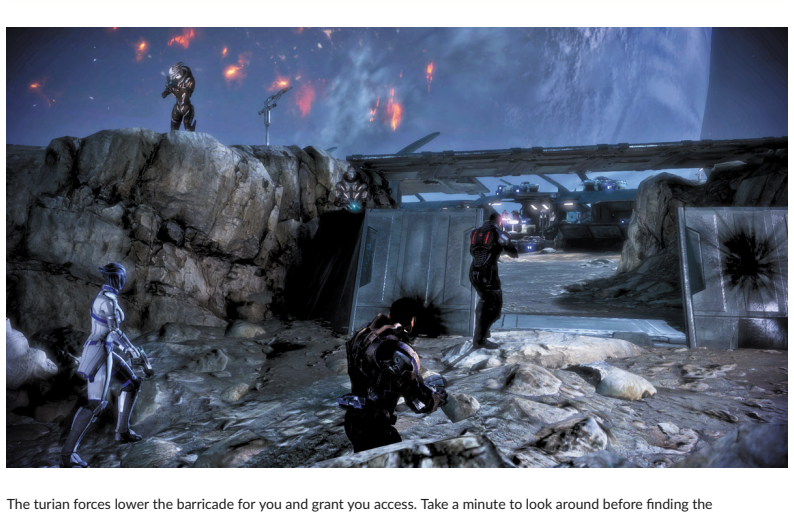
TURIAN COMMAND CAMP

Once you've secured the LZ, speak to the turian soldier there; he'll direct you to the command base where the turian general is waiting.

Climb onto the ridge and follow the path straight, then around the corner to the first barricade as the soldier suggested.

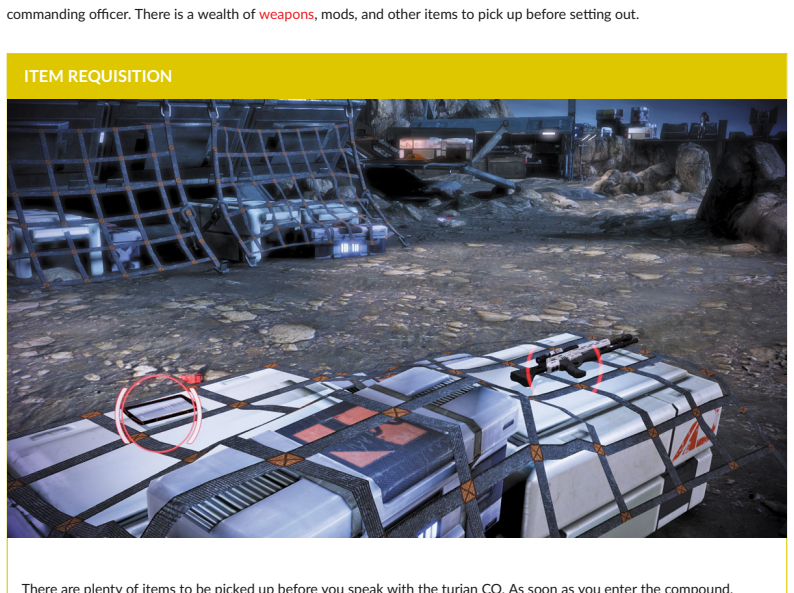
NOTE

Pausing at certain ledges during the level and looking out over the landscape will sometimes reward you with unique banter from your squadmates. There is one of those lookout points here, on the left of the path.



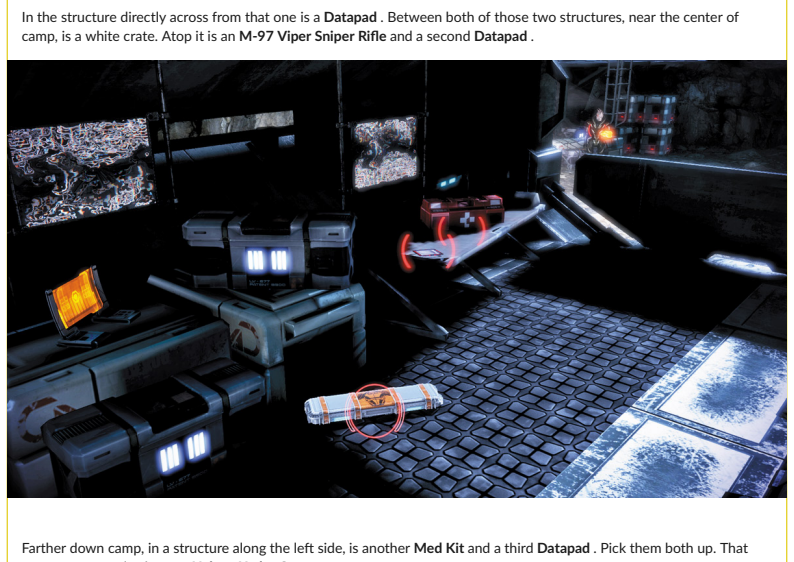
The turian forces lower the barricade for you and grant you access. Take a minute to look around before finding the commanding officer. There is a wealth of weapons, mods, and other items to pick up before setting out.

ITEM REQUISITION

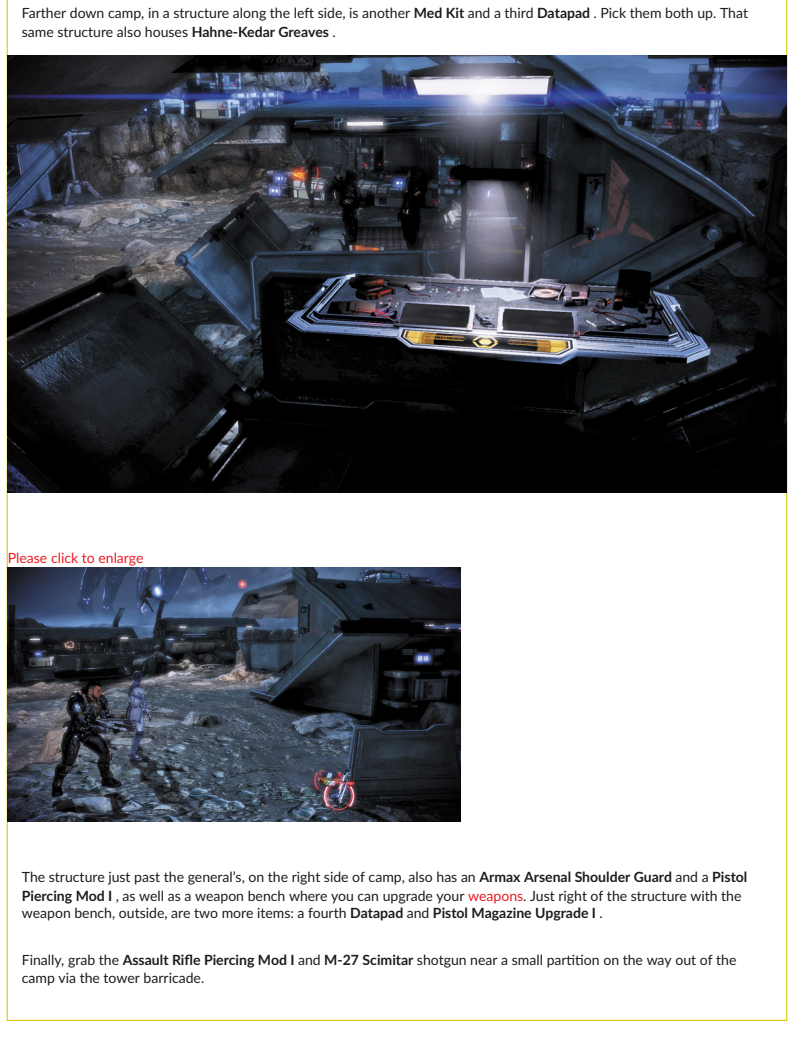


There are plenty of items to be picked up before you speak with the turian CO. As soon as you enter the compound, examine the structure to your left; you'll find a **Med Kit** there.

In the structure directly across from that one is a **Datapad** . Between both of those two structures, near the center of camp, is a white crate. Atop it is an **M-97 Viper Sniper Rifle** and a second **Datapad** .



Farther down camp, in a structure along the left side, is another **Med Kit** and a third **Datapad** . Pick them both up. That same structure also houses **Hahne-Kedar Greaves** .



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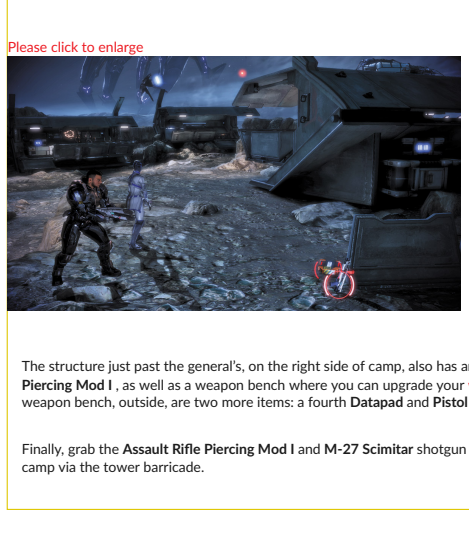


The structure just past the general's, on the right side of camp, also has an **Armax Arsenal Shoulder Guard** and a **Pistol Piercing Mod I** , as well as a weapon bench where you can upgrade your weapons. Just right of the structure with the weapon bench, outside, are two more items: a fourth **Datapad** and **Pistol Magazine Upgrade I** .

Finally, grab the **Assault Rifle Piercing Mod I** and **M-27 Scimitar** shotgun near a small partition on the way out of the camp via the tower barricade.

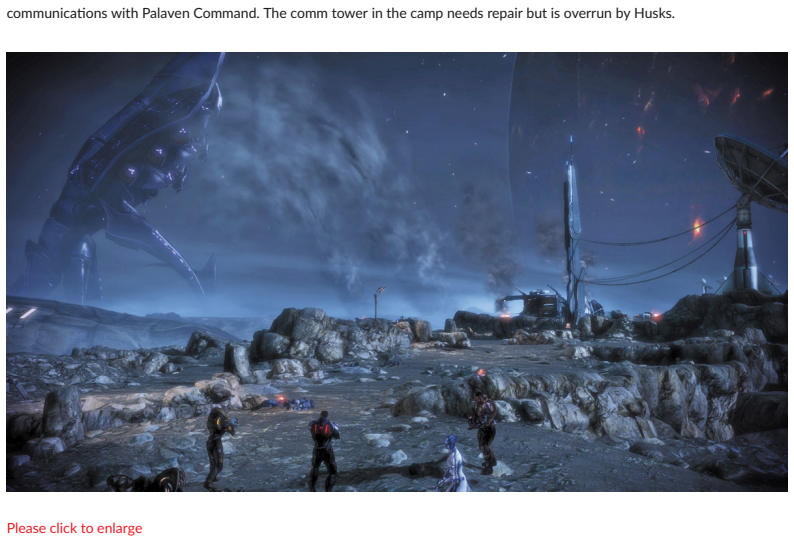
General Corinthus is waiting to speak to you at his small command post. Speak to him to find out about Primarch Fedorian.

As it turns out, you arrived a bit too late. Fedorian was killed half an hour prior to your arrival, and the turian forces are being decimated by the Reapers. Their numbers are too great to overcome.

TIP

This conversation with the general is an opportunity to gain Paragon/Renegade points. Sympathize with the general's losses and you'll gain Paragon points. Keep the conversation all business and you'll earn Renegade points.

The next turian in line to become the Primarch is currently unknown, and the only way to find out is to open up the line of communications with Palaven Command. The comm tower in the camp needs repair but is overrun by Husks.



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Exit the camp and follow the waypoint marker to the comm tower just outside of camp. The exit is just past the barricade where you located the M-27 Scimitar.

Walk out of the barricade and make a right. The tower is not far off, and neither are the Husks.

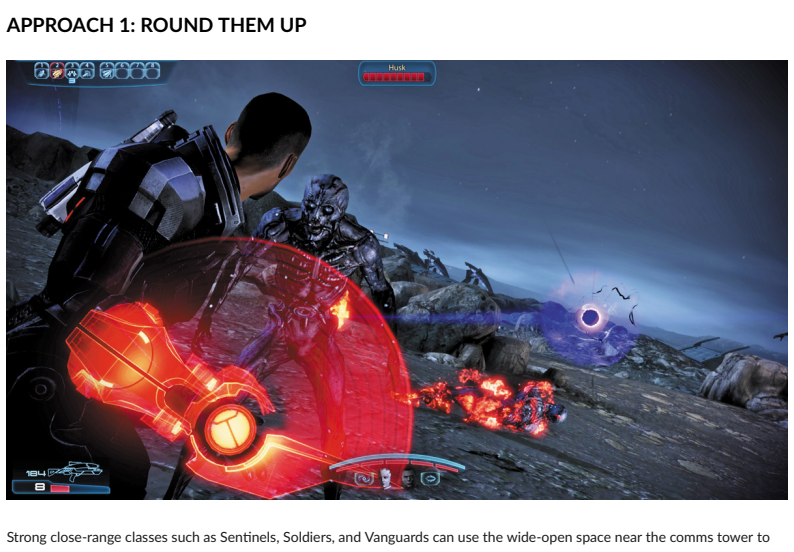
The first wave of Husks rushes you immediately. Order your squad members to take cover behind the nearest rockface and open fire.

The speedy creatures won't waste time closing the gap, so use either Liara's or your (if you're an Adept) Singularity to slow them down.

Rather than focus on the Husks trapped in the Singularity, turn your weapon to the Husks that are still rushing you.

As soon as you put them down, turn back to the enemies floating in the air, which may be coming back down to the ground any second now, and mow them down as well. However, the Husks don't let up yet.

APPROACH 1: ROUND THEM UP



Strong close-range classes such as Sentinels, Soldiers, and Vanguards can use the wide-open space near the comms tower to circle-strafe around the enemy, dealing close-range damage as enemies approach you.

Stay on the move to keep the Husks from getting too close, and use your squad members' powers to occasionally slow down the speedy beasts.

You'll incur some damage, as inevitably some Husks will make contact, but use quick melee blows to knock them off or use charged (heavy) melee blows to put them down.

Vanguards have the added comfort of using Shockwave, while Sentinels can use Lift Grenade and Throw to keep the Husks away.

TIP

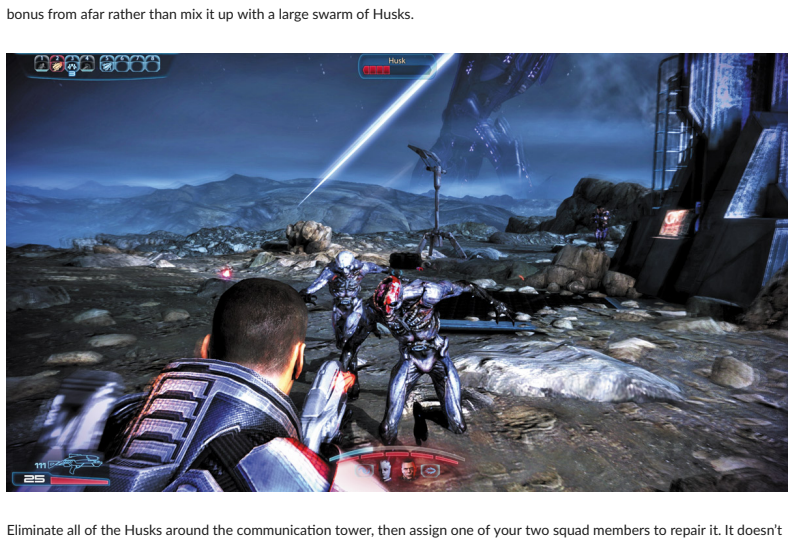
If the Husks are able to grab a hold of Shepard, then use melee repeatedly to escape their clutches.

APPROACH 2: "DRAW A LINE IN THE SAND"

Another approach, perhaps one more suitable to Engineers, Adepts, and Infiltrators, is to hunker down and "draw a line in the sand" by creating a wall of weapons fire and power combinations so that Husks cannot get near enough to cause you any damage.

While Adept-class players can rely on powers like Singularity and Warp to cause massive Husk explosions, Engineers can launch Combat Drones deep into the battlefield, well past their line in the sand, to distract Husks while they destroy them from a safe distance.

Infiltrator-class players may be tempted to use the Tactical Cloak and get up close and personal, which is a sound tactic if their powers have been upgraded to sufficient levels; however, this early in the game, it is better to use the Tactical Cloak's damage bonus from afar rather than mix it up with a large swarm of Husks.



Eliminate all of the Husks around the communication tower, then assign one of your two squad members to repair it. It doesn't matter which member you pick; there are no long-term consequences to this decision.

However, pick the squad member who least complements your current class and weapon/power loadout.

If you need someone with good Biotic powers, then ask James to fix it so Liara helps you in the following battle.

If you need someone capable of dishing out major weapons damage, ask Liara to fix it so James can help during the battle. Make your decision, then prepare for another onslaught of Husks.

TIP

As a Soldier class, we opted to keep James on the ground with us while Liara fixed the comm tower.

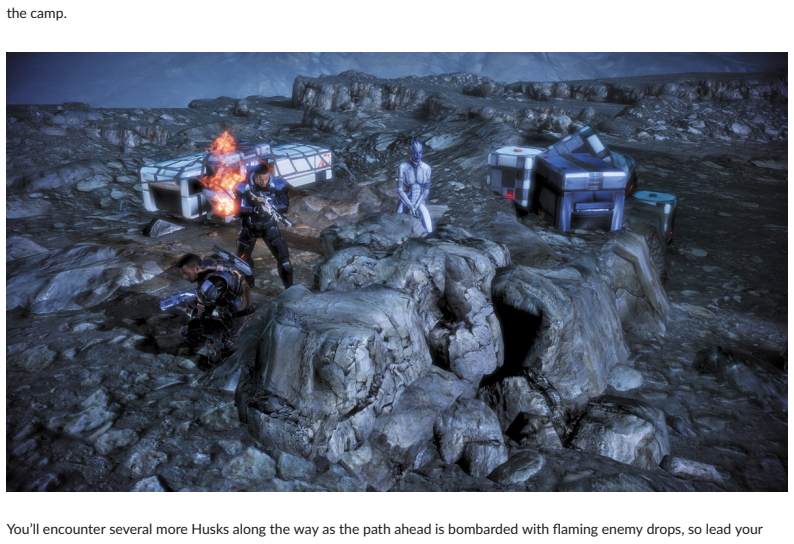
While her Biotic expertise would have complemented our raw power on the battlefield, helping to slow enemies down while we destroyed them, James's damage output along with our own ensured that we'd make short work of the Husks before they could do damage.

Similarly, if we were playing as an Adept class, we would've kept Liara on the ground. Biotic power combinations can match explosive, high-grade weapons fire when executed correctly.

If James is picked to fix the comm tower, an extra wave of husks will appear since James is not as technically savvy as someone such as Liara and will take longer to repair the tower.

The Husks attack from two different directions. Order your squad member to take point behind the tall pillar on the left, while you cover the area on the right.

Hold them off long enough for your third party member to repair the communication tower, then begin your approach back to the camp.



You'll encounter several more Husks along the way as the path ahead is bombarded with flaming enemy drops, so lead your squad up to the small platform ridge on the right.

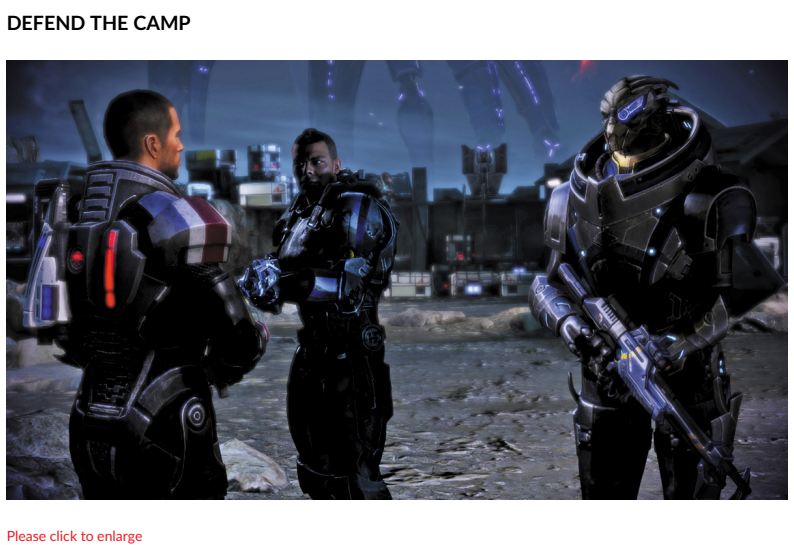
This elevated position will grant you a better vantage point to direct your squad and fire on the enemy. Your efforts prove successful, and the comms tower comes back online. In no time flat, the general gets information vital to your mission. Return to camp.

TIP

The following conversation between you, General Corinthus, and the rest of the squad can yield Paragon/Renegade points.

So choose your responses carefully. Express a sense of hope and positivity and you'll gain Paragon points; focus on the negative and you'll gain Renegade points.

DEFEND THE CAMP



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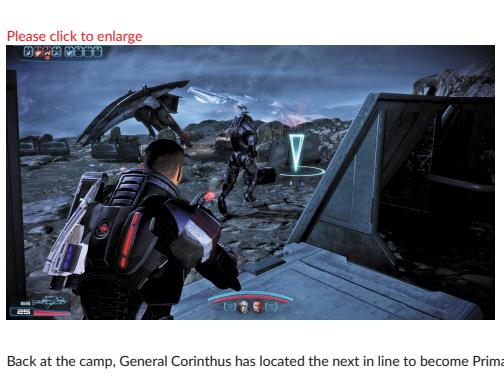


Back at the camp, General Corinthus has located the next in line to become Primarch. Better still, he's on Menae, not far from your location.

The new Primarch, a turian named Victus, is known to be unconventional and a skilled tactician; he's just the kind of help you need.

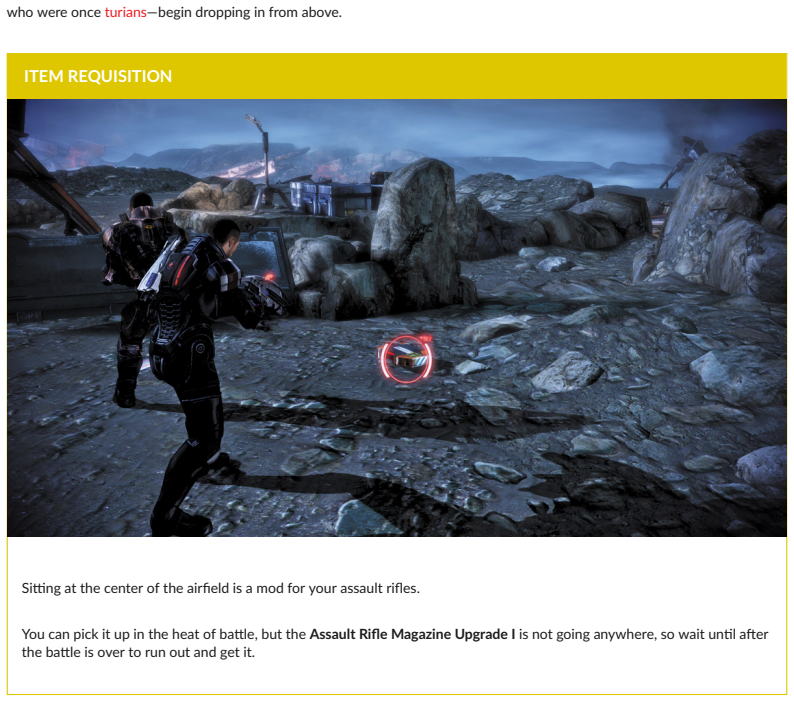
To help aid you in your search for the new Primarch, your old friend Garrus joins the squad. While you plan out your next move, Joker has some technical problems aboard the Normandy.

Liara heads back up to the ship, while Garrus remains behind as a full member of your squad.

A Reaper Harvester dives in from above on its way to attack the airfield.

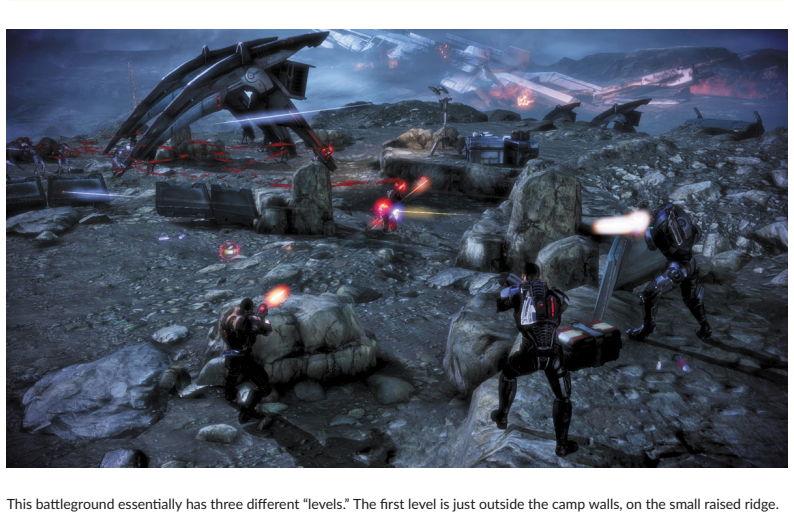
Follow the turian soldiers out to the airfield and immediately place your squadmates behind cover. Marauders—Reaper soldiers who were once turians—begin dropping in from above.

ITEM REQUISITION



Sitting at the center of the airfield is a mod for your assault rifles.

You can pick it up in the heat of battle, but the **Assault Rifle Magazine Upgrade I** is not going anywhere, so wait until after the battle is over to run out and get it.

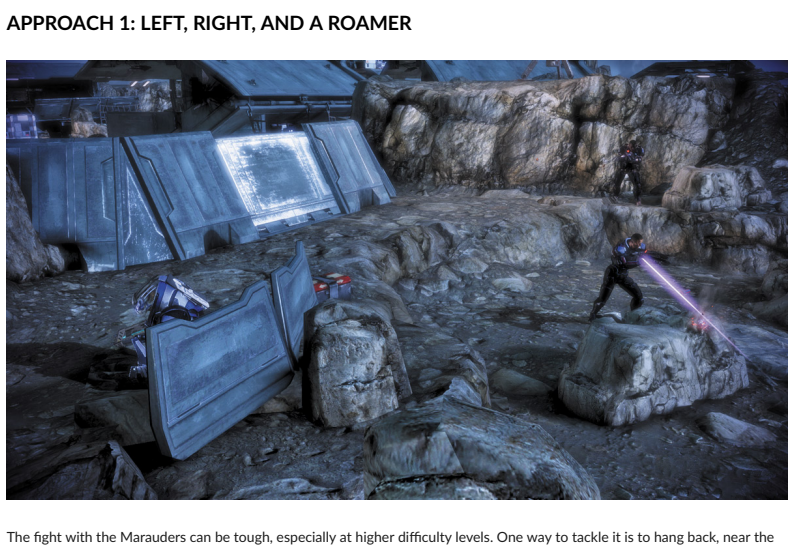


This battleground essentially has three different "levels." The first level is just outside the camp walls, on the small raised ridge. It has little cover other than a small rock ridge on the left and a short wall for cover on the right.

The second level is one step down from that and has slightly more cover closer to the center of the battleground. The small rock mounds provide more cover but require you to be closer to the center of the action.

The third level is deeper into the battlefield, well away from the camp walls, but offers plenty of cover for the entire squad with enough room to move around.

APPROACH 1: LEFT, RIGHT, AND A ROAMER



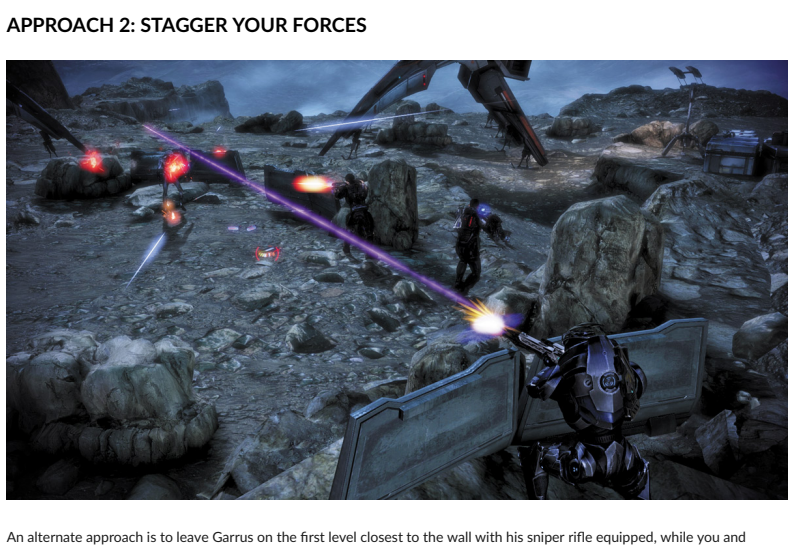
The fight with the Marauders can be tough, especially at higher difficulty levels. One way to tackle it is to hang back, near the wall (first level), and perch one squad member on each side.

Position your first squad member on the right, behind the small wall and the next on the far left. With both party members behind cover, your job is to roam around the battlegrounds and engage the enemy on one of the other two levels.

Vanguard or Infiltrator classes can excel as the roamer, using Biotic Charge and Tactical Cloak kills, respectively.

If your build is better suited for long-range combat, switch places with James and send him into the lower level while you, an Adept, Engineer, or sniper-proficient build, can whittle down enemies from the safety of your cover.

APPROACH 2: STAGGER YOUR FORCES

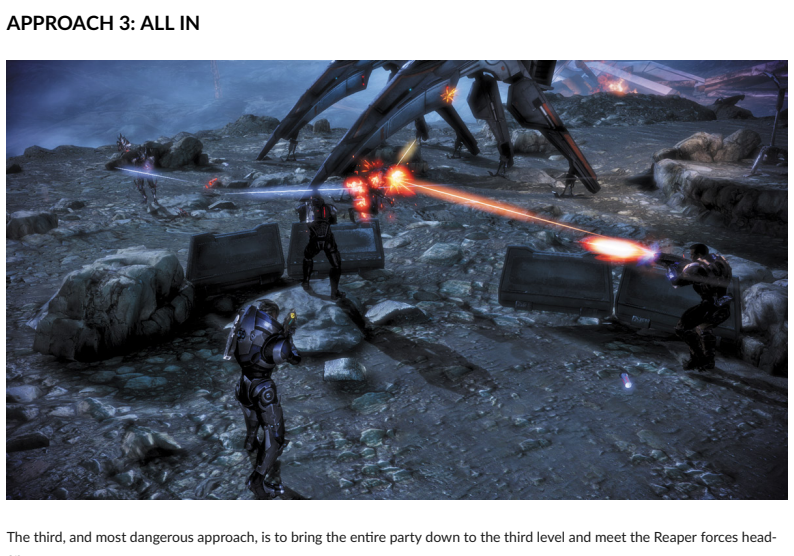


An alternate approach is to leave Garrus on the first level closest to the wall with his sniper rifle equipped, while you and James go down to the lower levels.

Depending on which build you have, you can order James to take cover behind the center rock structure near the center of the battleground, while you go to level three and act as the first line of defense.

If you're not comfortable with close-quarters combat, then take the center area, while James is assigned to the area closest to the Reapers' landing zone.

APPROACH 3: ALL IN

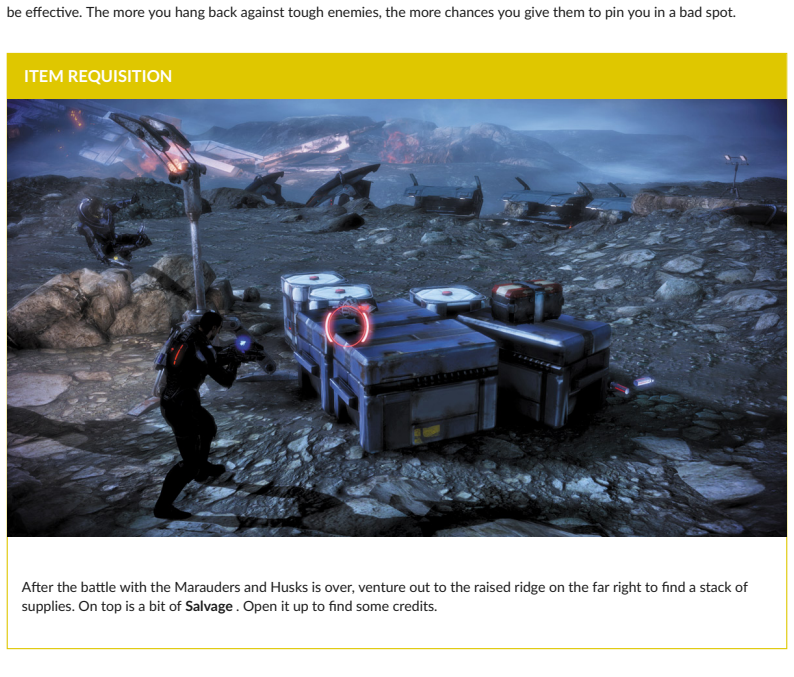


The third, and most dangerous approach, is to bring the entire party down to the third level and meet the Reaper forces head-on.

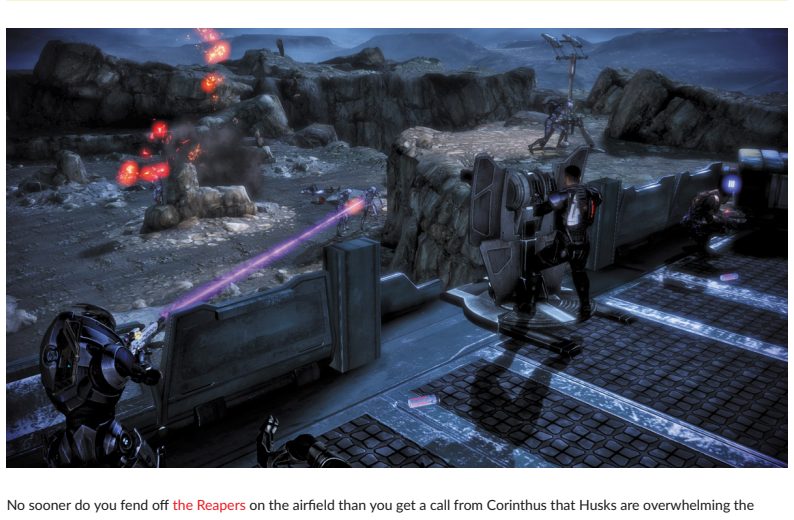
This approach is best for Soldier, Vanguard, and Sentinel classes that can be well equipped for close-quarters combat. Use a good mixture of grenades, power combinations, and duck-and-cover tactics to stay out of harm's way and maximize your damage output.

Ironically, this may be one of the best tactics on higher difficulty levels since it requires lots of movement and power combos to be effective. The more you hang back against tough enemies, the more chances you give them to pin you in a bad spot.

ITEM REQUISITION



After the battle with the Marauders and Husks is over, venture out to the raised ridge on the far right to find a stack of supplies. On top is a bit of **Salvage** . Open it up to find some credits.



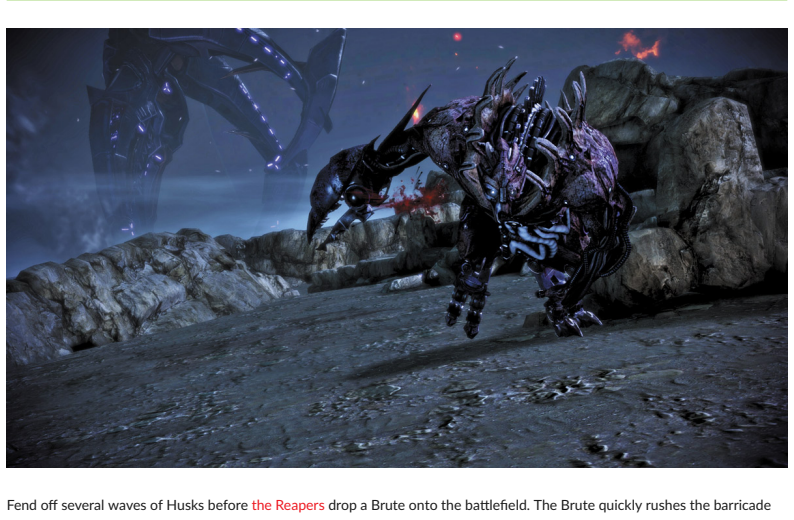
No sooner do you fend off the Reapers on the airfield than you get a call from Corinthus that Husks are overwhelming the camp's main barricade.

Rush back to the camp and climb up the ladder to the mounted turret. Take the turret and immediately open fire on the Husks storming the barricade.

They approach from the far left and right, so keep the turret shifting from side to side as they approach. As you blow them away, your two squadmates automatically take position on your left and right to protect both barricade entrances.

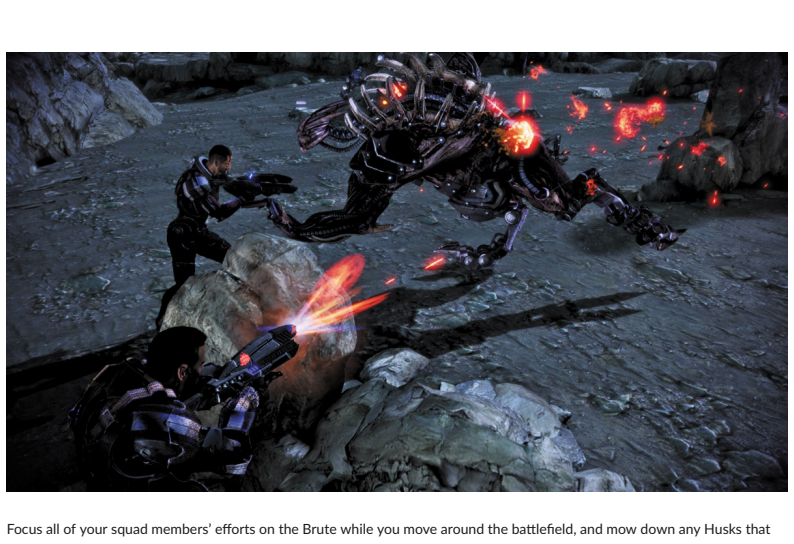
TIP

The mounted turret swings very slowly while zoomed in and firing, so let off the trigger to readjust between enemies.



Fend off several waves of Husks before the Reapers drop a Brute onto the battlefield. The Brute quickly rushes the barricade and knocks you off the wall onto the battlefield.

The area is wide open, and a few Husks still remain. Immediately open fire on the Brute and begin whittling its health down.

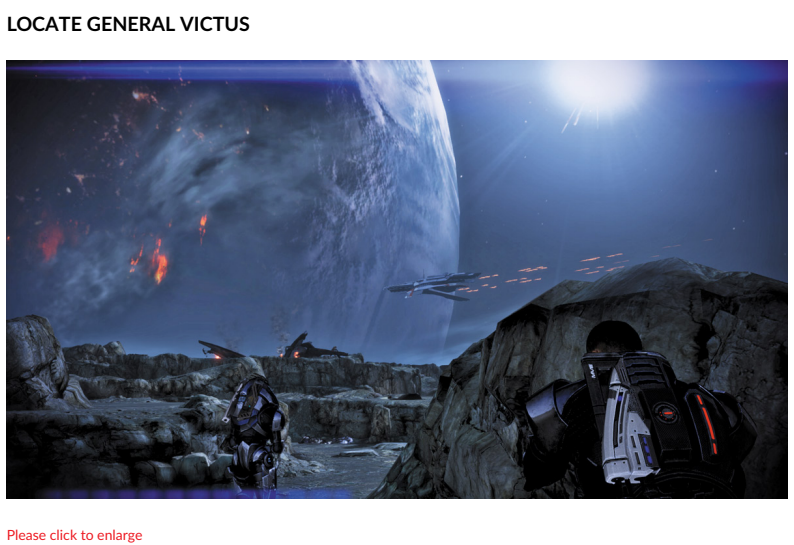


Focus all of your squad members' efforts on the Brute while you move around the battlefield, and mow down any Husks that attack.

If the Brute charges you, execute an evasive roll, then focus your fire on it as it passes you by. When it turns around, execute as many headshots as you can to knock off major chunks of its health.

After fending off the Reapers, General Corinthus is no closer to locating General Victus than before.

LOCATE GENERAL VICTUS



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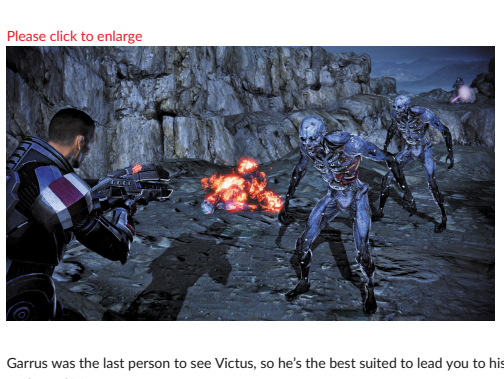
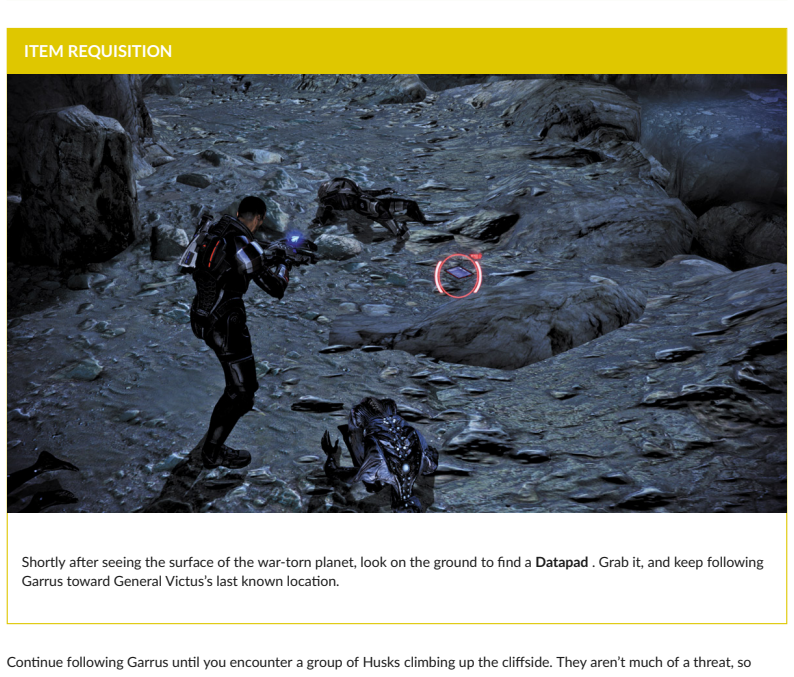


Garrus was the last person to see Victus, so he's the best suited to lead you to his last location. Follow Garrus across the surface of Menae.

TIP

Look up to see Palaven under attack and burning in front of you. You'll have more opportunities for unique dialogue options as you stop at the various vantage points along this path.

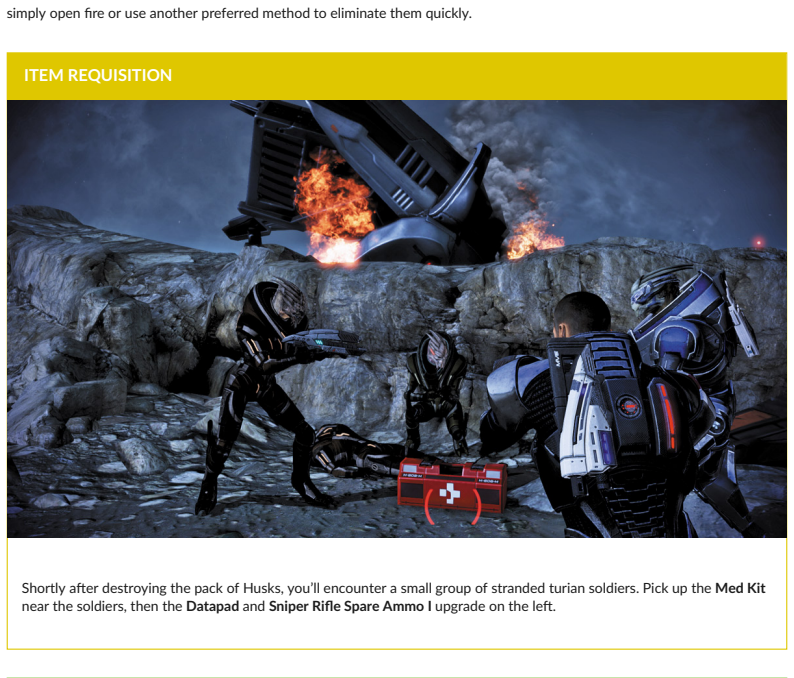
ITEM REQUISITION



Shortly after seeing the surface of the war-torn planet, look on the ground to find a **Datapad** . Grab it, and keep following Garrus toward General Victus's last known location.

Continue following Garrus until you encounter a group of Husks climbing up the cliffside. They aren't much of a threat, so simply open fire or use another preferred method to eliminate them quickly.

ITEM REQUISITION

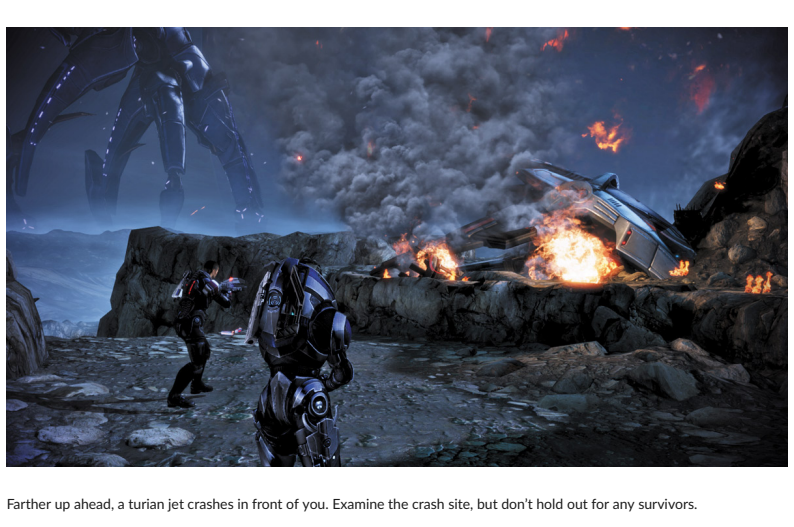


Shortly after destroying the pack of Husks, you'll encounter a small group of stranded turian soldiers. Pick up the **Med Kit** near the soldiers, then the **Datapad** and **Sniper Rifle Spare Ammo I** upgrade on the left.

TIP

During your trip across the moon's surface, pay attention to the banter between Garrus and James.

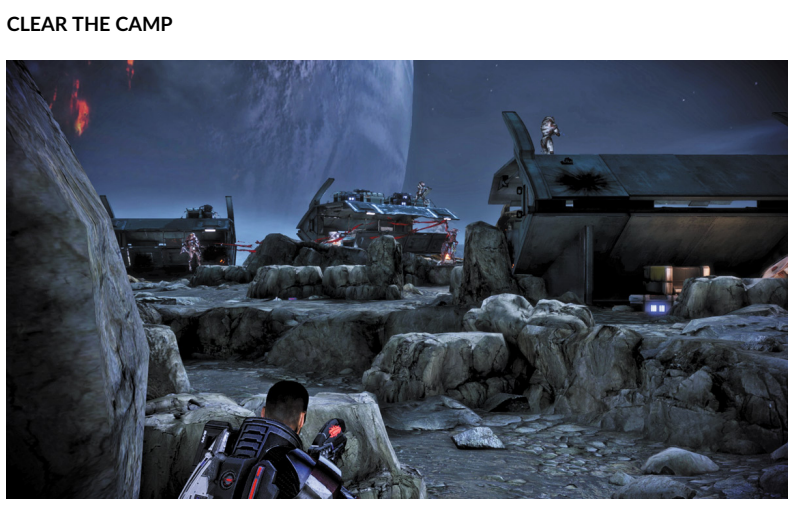
Their conversation has information and reminders that are important to understanding both the political situation that Shepard is dealing with and upcoming missions.



Farther up ahead, a turian jet crashes in front of you. Examine the crash site, but don't hold out for any survivors.

Leave the crash site behind and continue until you locate the next turian camp. Several soldiers are under siege from more Reaper forces. Jump in and lend a hand.

CLEAR THE CAMP



General Victus and his men are under attack from several Reaper Marauders and Cannibals. As soon as you enter the camp, you join the fight. Order your squad to take cover behind the nearest rock structures, then rush to cover on the camp's left side.

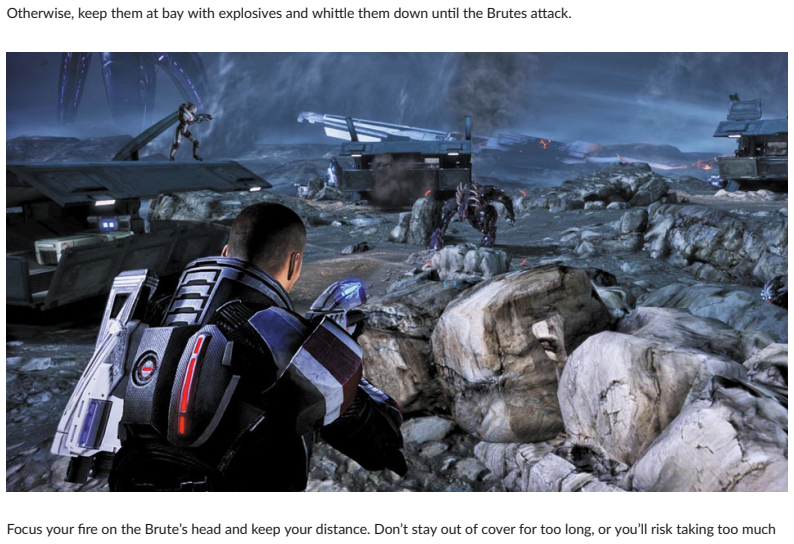
The enemy forces have a slight height advantage, but not by much. To make matters more difficult, they also have decent cover on the area above you.

APPROACH 1: FLUSH THEM OUT

Adept and explosive-proficient classes, such as grenade-toting Soldiers, can use powers and explosives to force Cannibals out of cover and into the open where they can get shredded by the rest of the squad.

Classes with Cryo Ammo or Incendiary Ammo can inflict extra damage on these creatures and make this encounter slightly easier to manage.

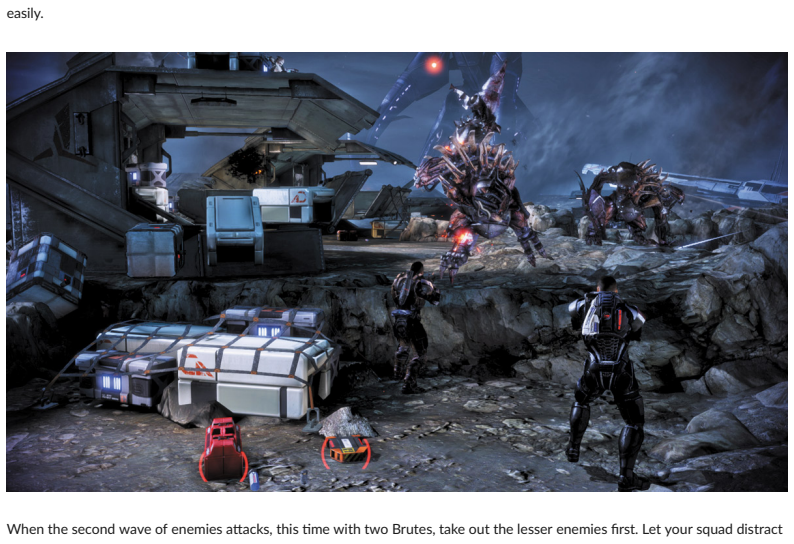
When the Marauders begin charging, duck behind cover and use powers such as Warp or Singularity to weaken them. Otherwise, keep them at bay with explosives and whittle them down until the Brutes attack.



Focus your fire on the Brute's head and keep your distance. Don't stay out of cover for too long, or you'll risk taking too much fire from the remaining Cannibals and Marauders.

f needs be, focus your squad's fire on the Brute to draw its attention away from you, while you finish off all other enemies nearby.

After eliminating all enemies but the Brute, rush deep into the camp to create some space, and lure the Brute out into the wide-open area where you can focus your fire on it without anything in your way. By now, the beast should be ready to drop easily.

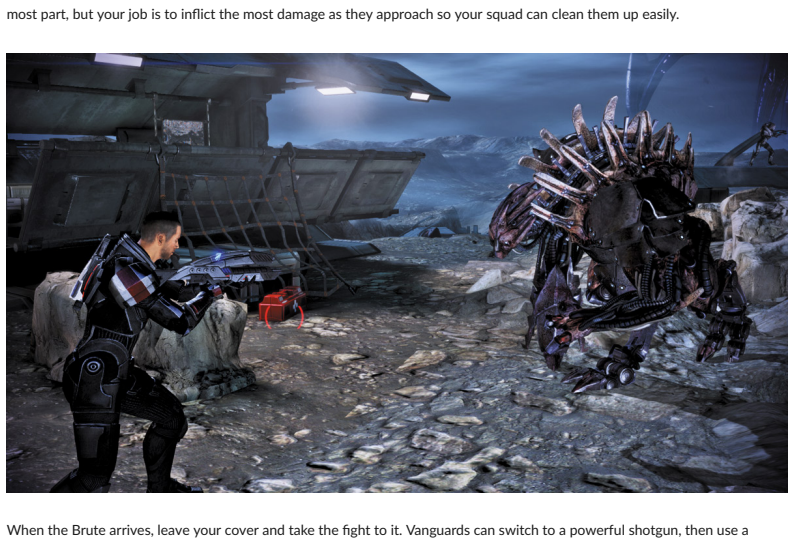


When the second wave of enemies attacks, this time with two Brutes, take out the lesser enemies first. Let your squad distract the Brutes, while you eliminate Marauders first. As soon as they're down, turn on one Brute while your squad takes out the second.

APPROACH 2: HANG BACK, THEN RUSH IN

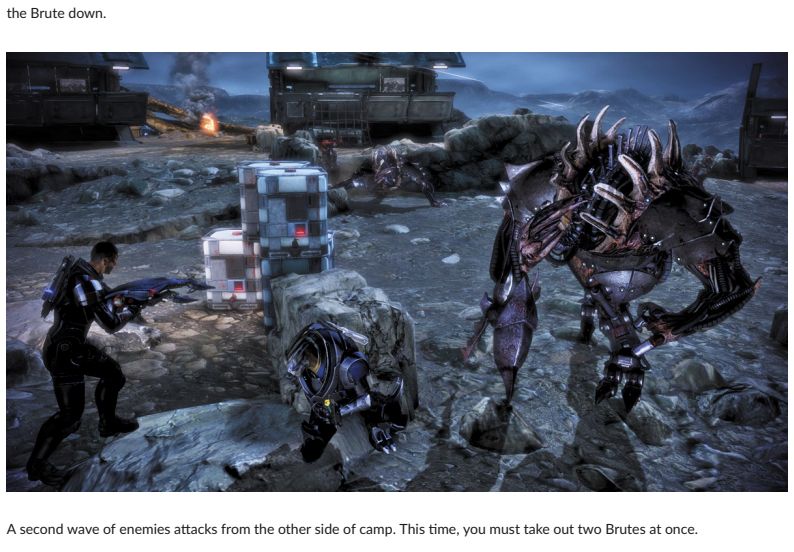
The entrance to the camp has excellent spots for cover if you hang back a bit. Stay away from the ridge leading up into the main camp, and instead order your squad to take cover behind it. Hold off the Cannibals and Marauders by picking them off from your covered position.

If they get too close, use powers such as Shockwave or grenades to force them back. Your squad can hold them off for the most part, but your job is to inflict the most damage as they approach so your squad can clean them up easily.



When the Brute arrives, leave your cover and take the fight to it. Vanguards can switch to a powerful shotgun, then use a combination of Biotic Charge and Nova to inflict maximum damage.

For an added damage boost, follow up Nova with a charged melee blow. Other classes can simply use the bait-and-dodge tactic, while following up with shotgun blasts and melee blows to keep the Brute off balance. Keep peppering it until you bring the Brute down.



A second wave of enemies attacks from the other side of camp. This time, you must take out two Brutes at once.

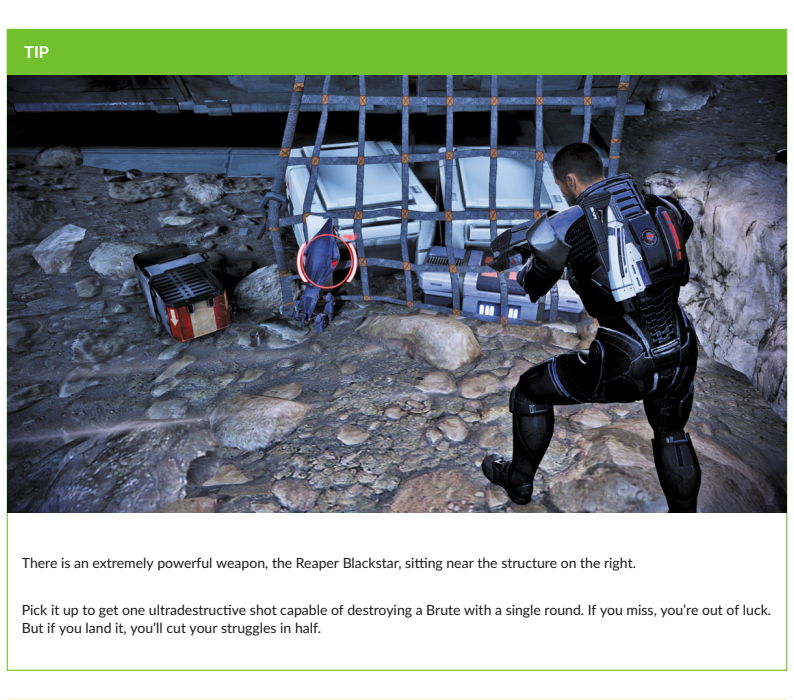
Since certain obstacles don't interfere with power-based attacks like Biotic Charge, Shockwave, and elemental attacks, lure the Brutes toward you, but place the large rock structures between you and the charging beasts.

While they move around the rocks, use Biotics to inflict damage. Combinations like Warp and Singularity or Stasis and Warp Ammo are great for maximizing damage. Let your squad take care of the lesser enemies while you use your abilities to fell the two large Brutes.

CAUTION

Don't get too comfortable while you're behind cover. Brutes are surprisingly athletic creatures capable of jumping over cover in certain situations.

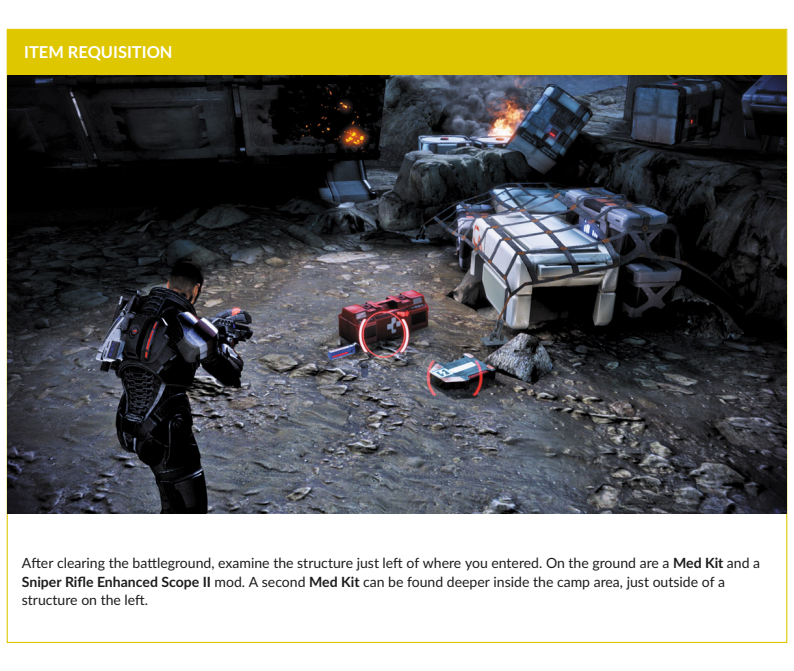
TIP



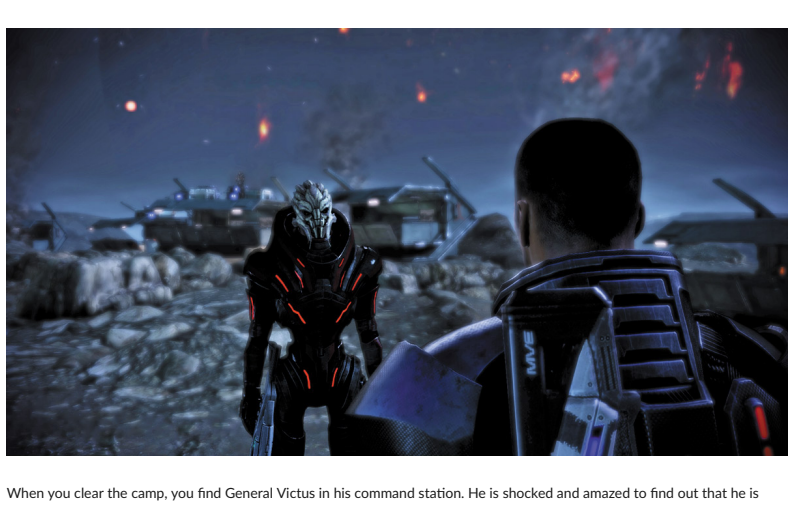
There is an extremely powerful weapon, the Reaper Blackstar, sitting near the structure on the right.

Pick it up to get one ultradestructive shot capable of destroying a Brute with a single round. If you miss, you're out of luck. But if you land it, you'll cut your struggles in half.

ITEM REQUISITION



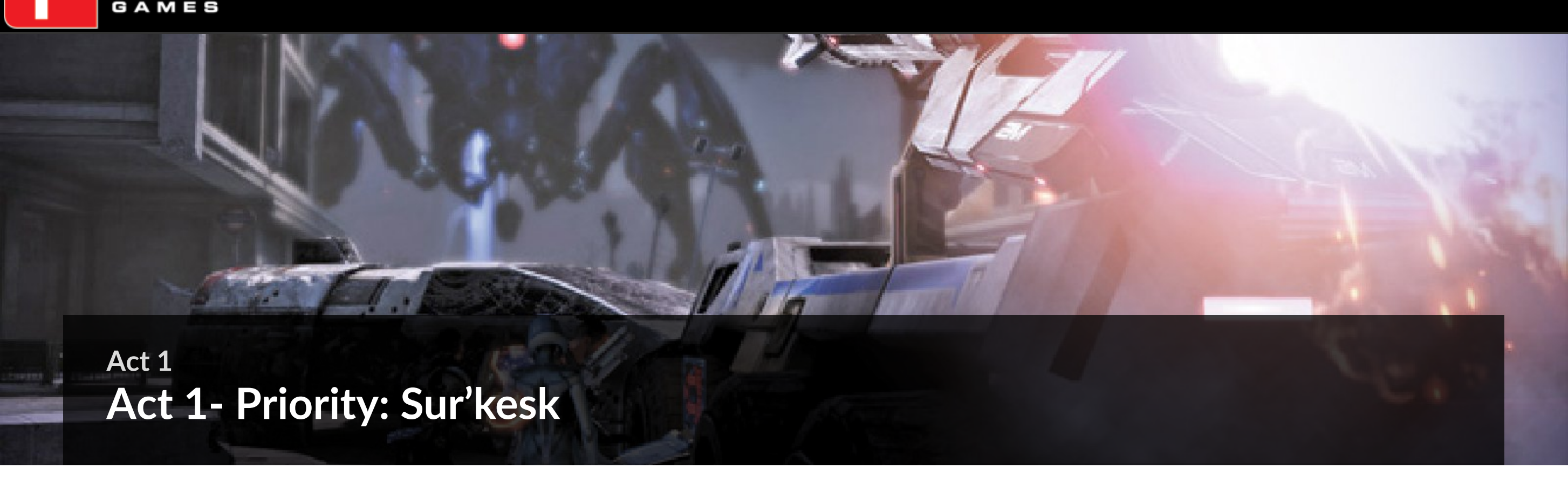
After clearing the battleground, examine the structure just left of where you entered. On the ground are a **Med Kit** and a **Sniper Rifle Enhanced Scope II** mod. A second **Med Kit** can be found deeper inside the camp area, just outside of a structure on the left.



When you clear the camp, you find General Victus in his command station. He is shocked and amazed to find out that he is next in line to be Primarch.

Convince him he needs to go with you and assume the station of Primarch. Even though he agrees to go with you, he cannot promise you his turian military support that you need.

Not until the krogans join the war and help the war efforts on Palaven. Your next task is clear: recruit the krogans.



Act 1

Act 1- Priority: Sur'kesk

Before they will help with the war effort, the krogan have demanded a cure for the genophage, the sterility plague infecting their species. Go to the salarian homeworld of Sur'Kesh and safely extract the krogan females who hold the key to the genophage cure.

MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: The salarian facility is a great level for varying your battle tactics.

Even though each level of the facility shares a similar bifurcated floor plan, the battles can range from tactical flanking maneuvers to head-on firefights.

The facility has narrow halls, which allow close-quarter combatants and players with explosive-proficient builds to excel in the cramped spaces.

The halls are not only narrow, but they're also very long, so players who favor sniper rifles and long-range combat can do well.

Power-heavy builds such as Vanguards and Adepts can use their abilities to create explosive combinations when enemies cramp together.

All players, with the help of Liara, can use Singularity to block narrow passages and create funnels and choke points in the halls, forcing the battle exactly where they want it to go.

When encountering smoke-filled areas, be cautious. Instead of rushing in with weapons blazing, take cover and wait for the smoke to dissipate before attacking.

The smoke may hide dangerous enemies, and rushing in can prove disastrous, especially for players who don't favor close-quarter combat.

Consequence Overview: Your time on the Citadel before the mission will offer you plenty of opportunities to shape your Paragon/Renegade character, but at the moment, those are all optional.

Several missions that become available now, such as the encounter between Liara and the Asari Matriarch at the Presidium, are great opportunities for Paragon/Renegade decisions.

Once the mission begins, you're immediately presented with opportunities to generate Paragon/Renegade points.

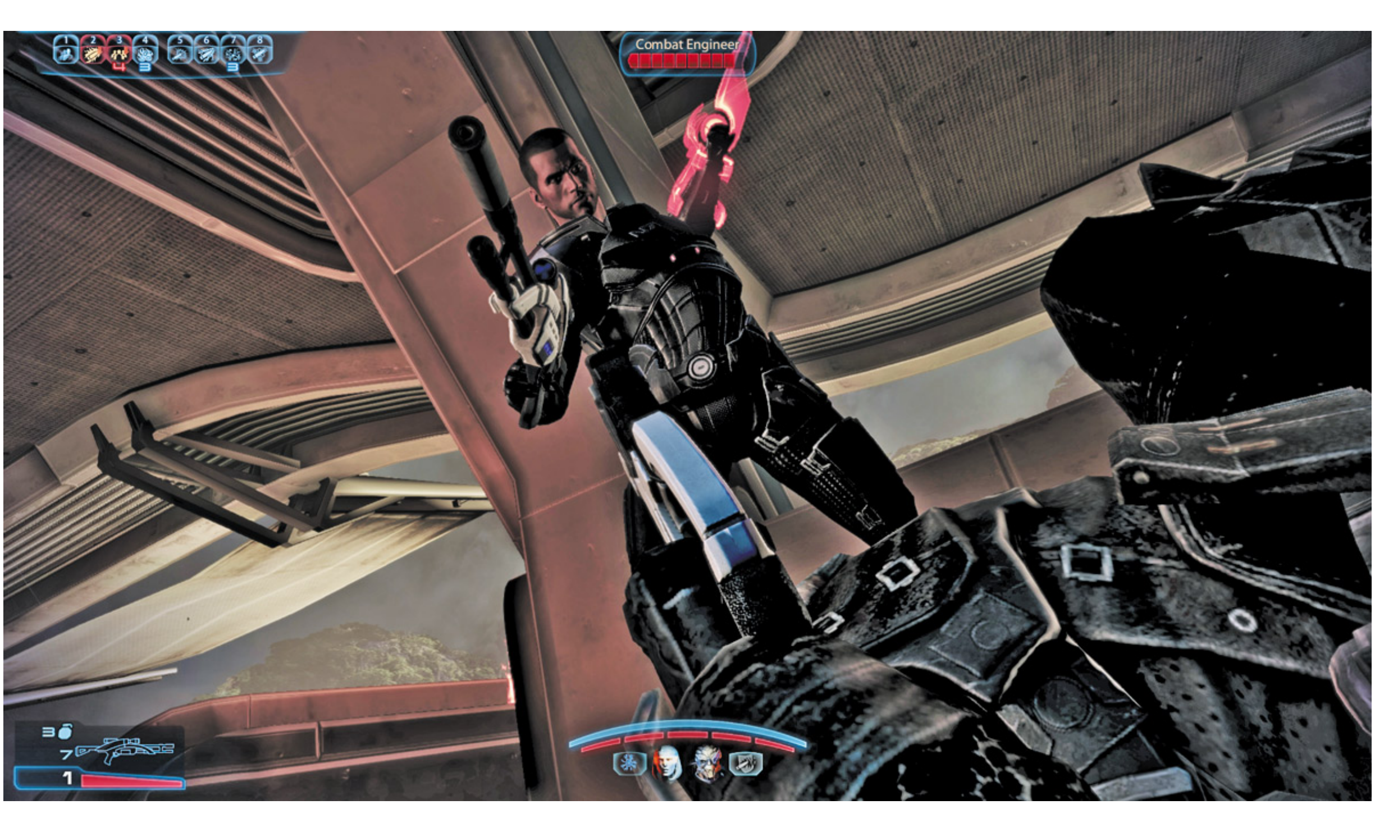
The first conversation you encounter, with Padok Wiks, will set the tone for the rest of this mission and will affect far-reaching decisions that impact the entire krogan species.

WAR ASSETS

ASSET	BECOMES AVAILABLE	CONDITION NEEDED
Major Kirrahe	Act 1—Priority: Sur'Kesh	Import Mass Effect 2 save with Kirrahe alive
Salarian Special Tasks Group	Act 1—Priority: Sur'Kesh	Import Mass Effect 2 save with Kirrahe alive

ITEM REQUISITION BRIEFING

Armax Arsenal Greaves	Pistol Scope
Assault Rifle Extended Barrel	Salvage Parts
Datapad	Scorpion
M-13 Raptor Sniper Rifle	Sentry Interface
Medical Station	Shotgun Spare Ammo
Pistol High-Caliber Barrel	



AROUND THE GALAXY

Mission Unlocks
Apien Crest: Banner of the First Regiment (see *Hub Missions*)
Aria: Blood Pack, Eclipse, Blue Suns (see *Hub Missions*)
Benning: Evidence (see *Hub Missions*)
Citadel Missions: Hanar Diplomats, Barla Von, Heating Units, Batarian Codes, Improved Power Grid, Biotic Amp Interfaces (see *Hub Missions*)
Grissom Academy: Investigation (see *N7 Missions*)
Irune: Book of Plenix (see *Hub Missions*)
Ismar Frontier: Prototype Components (see *Hub Missions*)
Kite's Nest: Pillars of Strength (see *Hub Missions*)

Mission Locks
None

WAR PREPARATIONS

There isn't much to do aboard the Normandy yet; however, that doesn't mean that there aren't things to do before getting to the next mission.

If you'd like to get straight to the next mission, skip to the "Host the Summit" section later in the guide.

ABOARD THE NORMANDY

There isn't much to do on the Normandy at the moment, but you can use the vid-com to speak with Admiral Hackett and update him about the upcoming summit.

Inform him that the asari are out but the krogan may have to join if the turians are going to help

Private Terminal
Use

You can also stop by your private terminal and check your e-mail. You'll get a few messages (most notably from your hospitalized friend, Kaidan or Ashley), a salarian Spectre, and your old friend Aria from Omega.

Also aboard the Normandy are Garrus, near the battery, and the new Primarch in the War Room. Speak to both men if you have the time.

POWER OUTAGE

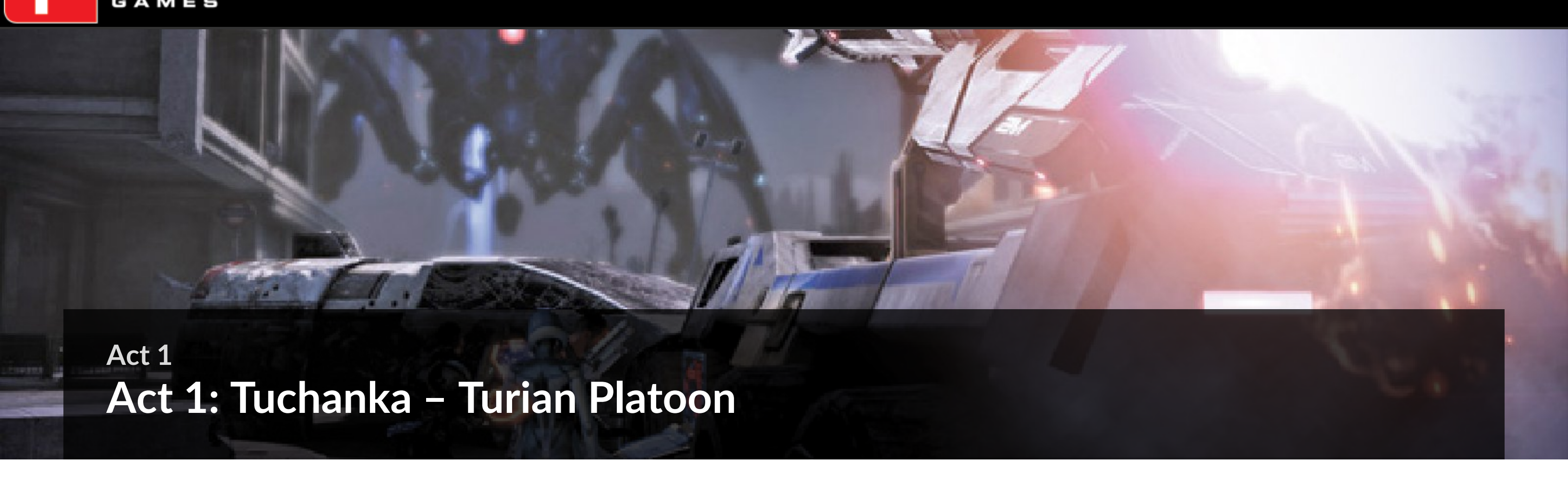
The strange technical problems that Joker experienced aboard the Normandy haven't gone away. In fact, they've worsened and seem to be emanating from the AI Core.

Take the elevator down to the crew deck and visit the AI Core to investigate.

VISIT THE CITADEL

Unlike the Normandy, there is plenty to do at the Citadel. Everything from visiting your friend in the hospital to reuniting with Aria and accepting some missions.

If you aren't in a hurry, you can even complete some missions within the Citadel.



Act 1

Act 1: Tuchanka – Turian Platoon

Primarch Victus has asked for help with a downed ship and has provided a NavPoint on Tuchanka. Land on Tuchanka and investigate.

MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: Tuchanka isn't a hospitable planet to begin with, but the Reaper invasion has made it nearly unbearable. The battles here rage across narrow, debris-filled halls and elevated platforms and culminate in a wide-open arena.

Regardless of whether the area is a narrow hall or a courtyard, the rubble and debris will always provide excellent cover for you and your team.

Power-heavy classes such as Adept and Vanguard can make great use of the cramped hallways, while weapon-proficient classes such as Soldiers can exploit the areas by keeping enemies at bay with a constant barrage of heavy fire.

Consequence Overview: Prior to beginning this mission, you can speak to Lieutenant Cortez aboard the Normandy. Lieutenant Cortez is struggling with some deep personal issues, and your responses, whether sensitive and understanding or cold and unfeeling, will align in a clear Paragon/Renegade result.

Don't worry about your conversation with Primarch Victus to trigger this mission. Even though you can investigate about his motivations and get more background, the responses won't affect your Paragon/Renegade leaning.

You'll also engage Lieutenant Victus in a critical conversation in which you either motivate him through charismatic support or steeled military harshness.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Hahne-Kedar Chestplate	Shotgun Smart Choke
M-9 Tempest	SMG Magazine Upgrade
Med Kit	SMG Ultralight Materials
Phaeston	Sniper Rifle Spare Ammo
Reaper Blackstar	Sniper Rifle Extended Barrel
Salvage Parts	

AROUND THE GALAXY

Mission Unlocks

Tuchanka: Bomb (See *N7 Missions* Section)
N7: Cerberus Attack (See *N7 Missions* Section)
N7: Cerberus Abduction* (See *N7 Missions* Section)

NOTE

*This unlocks only if you've already completed Attican Traverse: Krogan Team.

Attican Traverse: Krogan Team (See Campaign Section)
Priority: Tuchanka (See Campaign Section)

Mission Locks

None

WAR PREPARATIONS

The Normandy is running smooth, and everyone is well aware of the issues at hand. Despite that, there are still people aboard the ship who are dealing with issues of their own.

If you'd like to get straight to the next mission, skip to the "Extract Turian Survivors" section later in the guide.

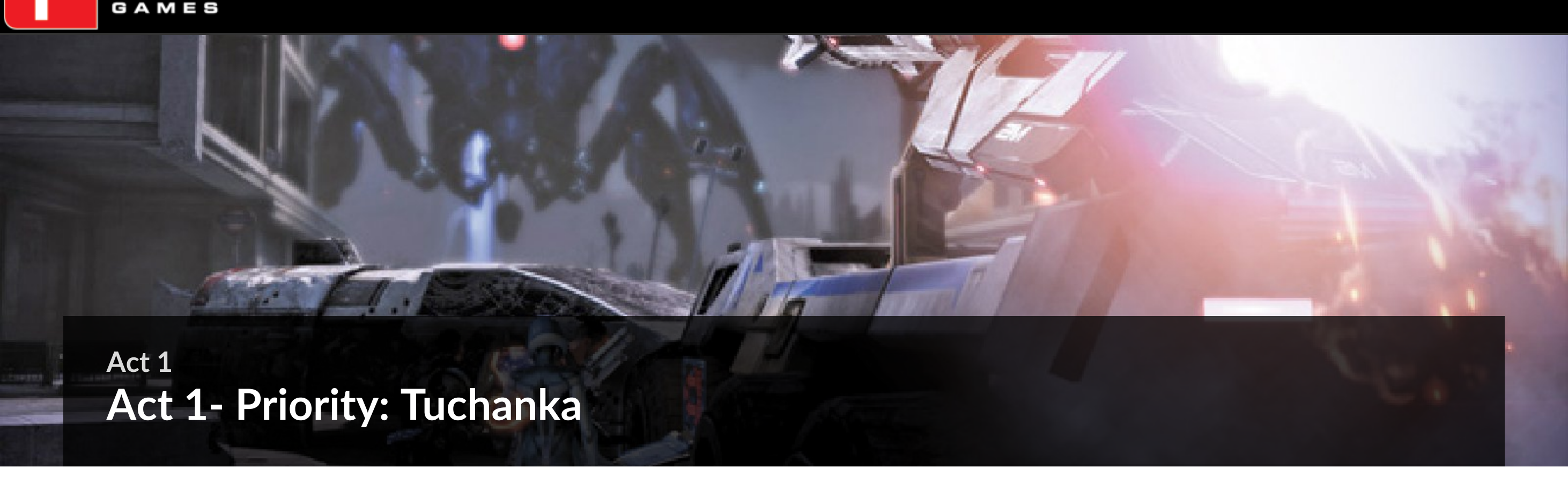
ABOARD THE NORMANDY

Any good leader will look after the welfare of his or her men. Lieutenant Cortez is quietly suffering down in the shuttle bay. If you want to continue establishing a rapport with him, go down to the shuttle bay and speak with him.

VISIT THE CITADEL

Now is also a good time to wrap up any other Citadel missions you may have taken on earlier. There haven't been many new developments at the Citadel, but it's always worthwhile to visit, check the shops, and acquire more experience, credits, and war assets.

However, do check your e-mail. If you haven't already visited the hospital to check up on Ashley or Kaidan, do so. And if you have, they may have sent an e-mail saying that they are ready for another visit. To build rapport with them, it may be important to visit them once again, now that they have become a Spectre. Ignoring Ashley or Kaidan in the hospital may have serious consequences later in the game.



Act 1

Act 1- Priority: Tuchanka

The genophage cure is a success, but it must be synthesized and dispersed across all of Tuchanka using the Shroud tower. Land on Tuchanka and get Eve safely to the tower.

MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: The ruins of Tuchanka are surprisingly intricate and ornate for such a strong warrior species. Just as you might expect, though, they also make for great, dynamic battlegrounds.

The first major battle takes place before, then after a bridge. Players skilled in flanking maneuvers can take advantage of the complex ruins, while power-heavy players can appreciate the wide-open spaces with little to get in the way of projectiles.

Consequence Overview: This mission is full of complex choices that can alter the war. Nearly every conversation you have from the beginning of the mission to the final bit of dialogue is laden with some amount of Paragon/Renegade consequence.

Early on you'll be faced with a dilemma. The salarian Dalatrass Linron will present you with a proposition that can have very dynamic results.

To complicate matters more, your actions between the beginning of the mission, when she speaks to you, and the final decision point at the end of the mission can alter your Paragon/Renegade leaning.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Assault Rifle Extended Barrel III	Pistol Magazine Upgrade
Death Mask	Pistol Melee Stunner
Graal Spike Thrower	Shotgun Smart Choke
M-5 Phalanx	SMG Scope
Med Kit (x2)	

WAR ASSETS

ASSET	BECOMES AVAILABLE	CONDITION NEEDED
Salarian First Fleet	Act 1—Priority: Tuchanka	Side with Salarians and do not cure the genophage
Turian 43rd Marine Division	Act 1—Priority: Tuchanka	None. Automatically unlocks.
Turian Seventh Fleet	Act 1—Priority: Tuchanka	None. Automatically unlocks.
Turian Engineering Corps	Act 1—Priority: Tuchanka	None. Automatically unlocks.
Urdnot Wreav	Act 1—Priority: Tuchanka	None. Automatically unlocks. (Only if you did not import a *Mass Effect* save with Wrex alive)
Urdnot Wrex	Act 1—Priority: Tuchanka	Import a Mass Effect save with Wrex alive
Krogan Clans	Act 1—Priority: Tuchanka	None. Automatically unlocks.
Clan Urdnot	Act 1—Priority: Tuchanka	None. Automatically unlocks.
Dr. Mordin Solus	Act 1—Priority: Tuchanka	Mordin lives through the end of the mission
Krogan Mercenaries	Act 1—Priority: Tuchanka	Import a save with Wrex alive and cure the genophage

AROUND THE GALAXY

Mission Unlocks

Priority: Citadel (See *Campaign* section)
N7: Cerberus Fighter Base (See *N7 Missions* Section)

Mission Locks

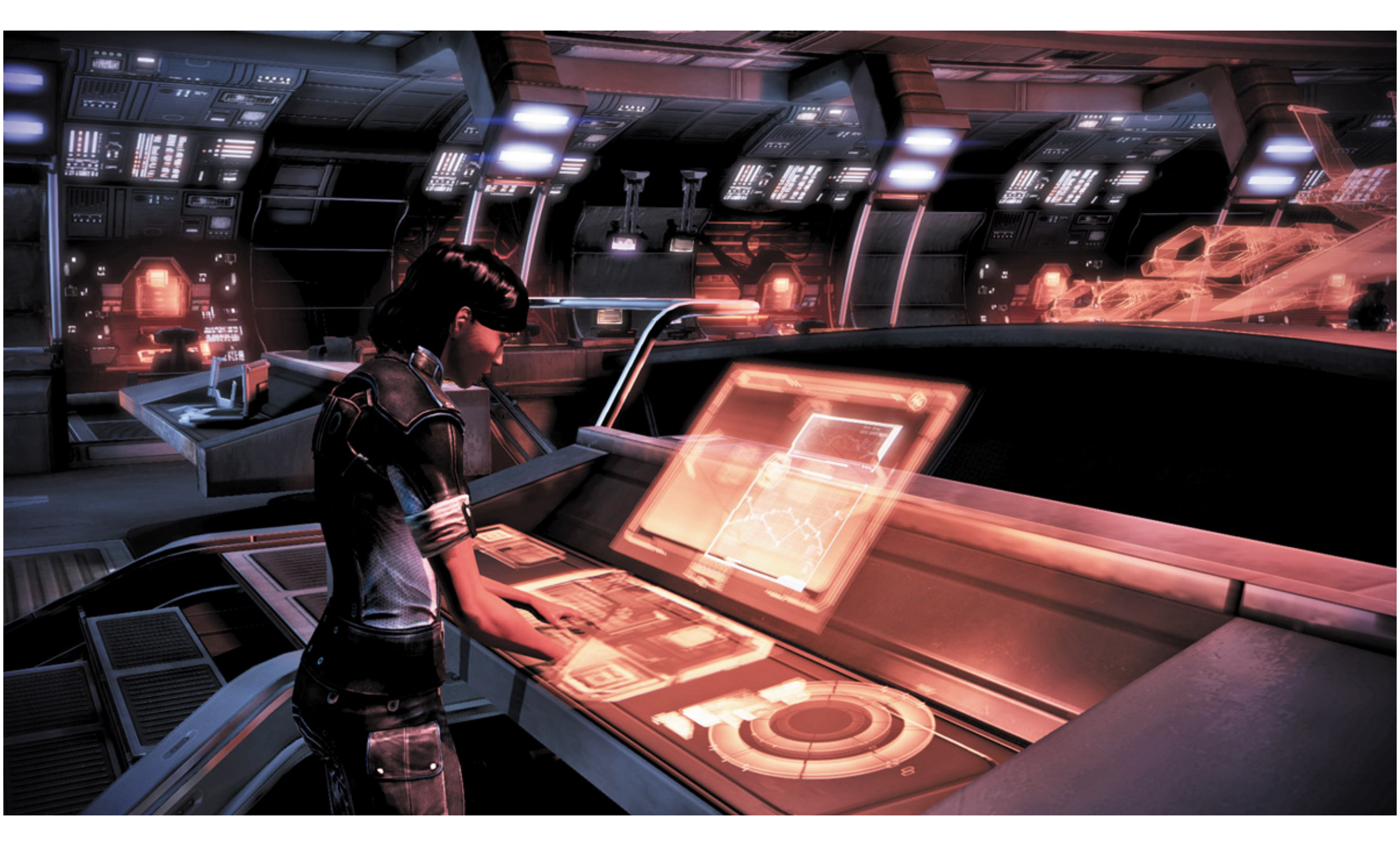
None

WAR PREPARATIONS

You're about to take a big step in the war-preparation efforts, and the following mission will change the course of the war and give shape to the Alliance fleet that helps fight the Reapers. Take a minute to do your rounds on the Normandy and speak with several key people.

If you'd like to get straight to the next mission, skip to the "Cure the Genophage" section.

SPEAK WITH SPECIALIST TRAYNOR

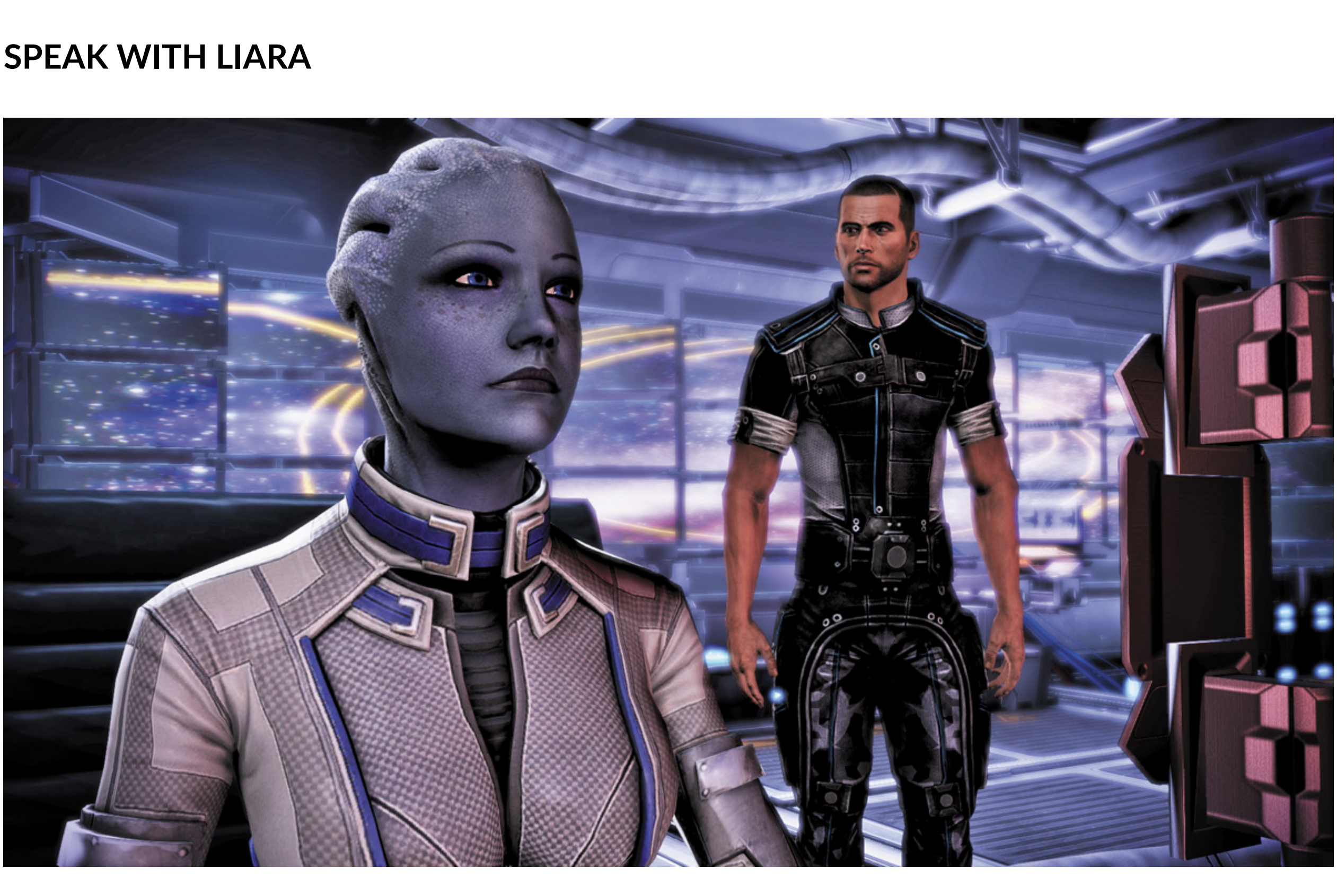


Stop by the CIC and visit with Specialist Traynor. If you're interested in potentially sparking romantic interest, now is a good time to show interest in how she's acclimating to the Normandy.

If you saved the Rachni during "Attican Traverse: Missing Scouts," you can also check your private terminal for a message from Admiral Hackett.

He sent you an e-mail about the Rachni and their strange behavior. Read the e-mail, then go speak to Specialist Traynor again to get some insight on the Rachni's communication methods.

SPEAK WITH LIARA



You can also visit with Liara before this next mission. She's been hard at work trying to recruit new engineers to help build the Crucible (what the Council is now calling the Prothean weapon).

If you've also completed other missions in between, there might be some available upgrades you can purchase at the Intel Terminal.

Finally, check out the Shadow Terminal to get some intel on key players in the war. Liara has e-mails from everyone from Admiral Anderson to Admiral Hackett.

The conversation with Liara quickly turns personal, so be mindful of your responses if you want to pursue a romance with her.

SPEAK WITH DR. MORDIN AND THE KROGANS

Stop by the medical bay to find Dr. Solus speaking with Eve, the female krogan. When Wreav arrives, the conversation gets a bit heated. Either support Wreav or talk him down to generate Renegade or Paragon points.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

If Mordin is dead in your imported save, then this will be Padok Wiks. Similarly, Wreav can potentially be Wrex instead if he survived the events of *Mass Effect 1* .

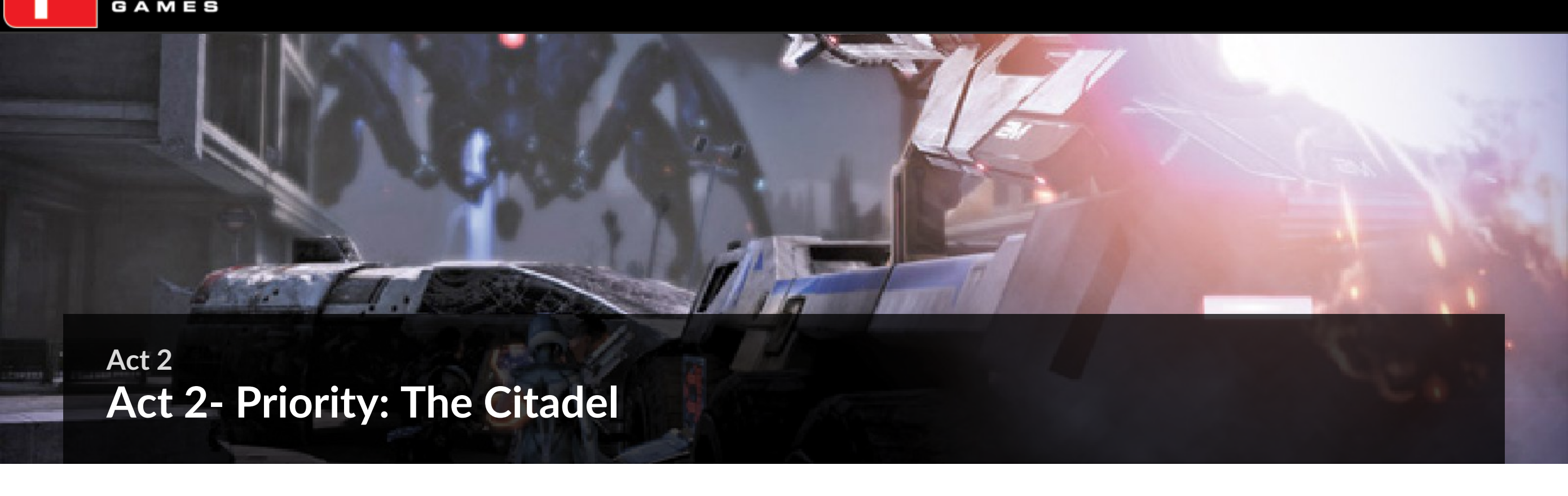
If you destroyed Maelon's data in *Mass Effect 2* , then Eve will occasionally cough and Mordin or Padok will warn you her health is faltering and there's nothing they can do about it.

VISIT THE CITADEL

Now is also a good time to complete lingering Citadel missions. If you left any missions incomplete or have items/intel to turn in to people at the Citadel, stop by and complete them.

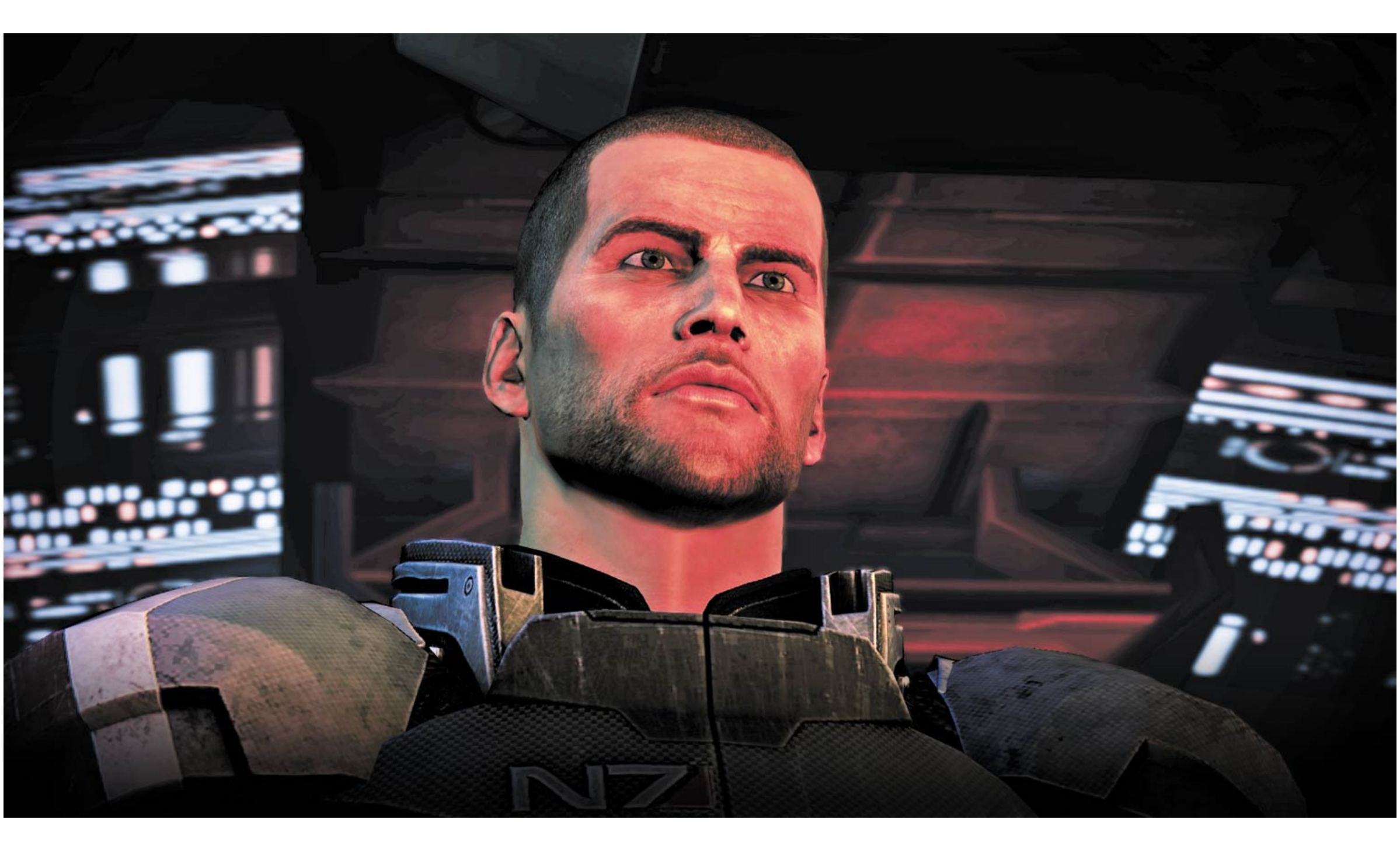
The experience points and potential war assets are great to have sooner rather than later.

Now is an especially good time to complete Citadel Quests since it will undergo a massive change in the next mission. The next time you try to land at the Citadel, you will be drawn immediately into the next mission.



Act 2

Act 2- Priority: The Citadel



The Citadel is under attack by Cerberus forces. Work with Commander Bailey to stop Cerberus and protect the Council.

MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: Battle on the Citadel can be as varied as the Councilors who make their residence here. The C-Sec landing zone is divided into three lanes of approach, which means multiple tactics are available. The lanes are long, making them a great playground for sniper-proficient classes.

In fact, many of the other battle arenas are suited perfectly for snipers and for one specific enemy encounter (an Atlas) that can be a lot of fun for skilled sharp-shooters, so bring a sniper rifle along even if you don't fancy it as a go-to weapon.

The later levels of the Presidium, along with the plaza, are also long, narrow battle arenas with plenty of niches, nooks, and crannies for decent cover. Engineer-class players can make great use of their Drones against two new enemies, while other close-quarter combat specialists will appreciate the narrow halls.

Consequence Overview: There are two main conversations during this mission that offer Renegade/Paragon opportunities. The first is a minor conversation with Commander Bailey. He'll fill you in on the situation, and your responses will dictate whether you earn Paragon/Renegade points.

The second, far more important instance, is a heated encounter you have with an old friend. During the final phase of this mission, you'll have to convince your ex-ally (either Kaidan or Ashley) once and for all that you're not still working with Cerberus.

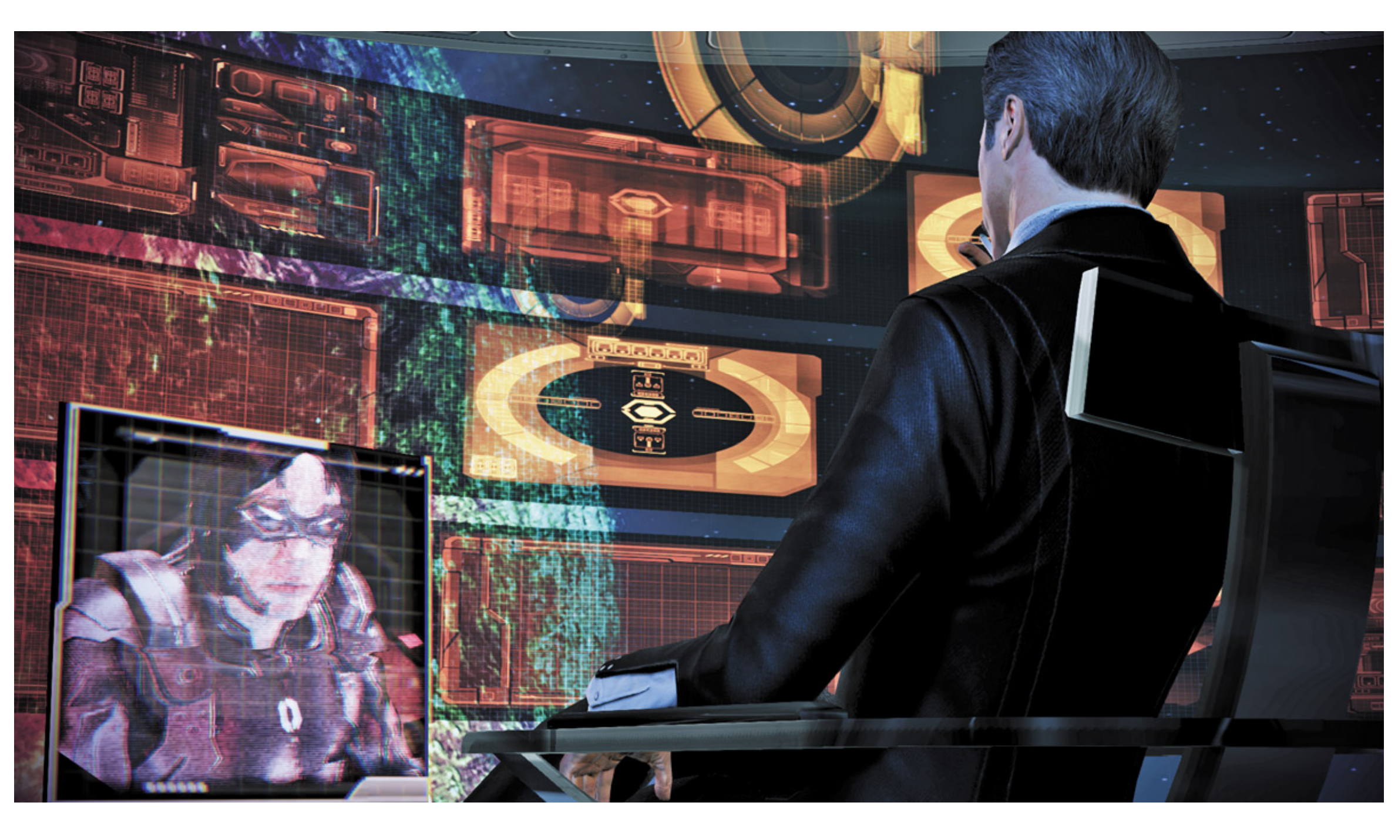
During this second conversation, you'll also have to decide to take action against your old friend or not. Your decision will affect whether you can recruit them into your squad, so be prepared to make some big decisions.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Assault Rifle Piercing Mod	Med Kit
Credits	Pistol High-Caliber Barrel Mod
Datapad	Pistol Piercing Mod
Locker	Recon Hood
M-25 Hornet	Securitel Helmet
M-76 Revenant	Sniper Rifle Extended Barrel
M-358 Talon	Sniper Rifle Piercing Mod
Medical Station (x3)	

WAR ASSETS

ASSET	BECOMES AVAILABLE	CONDITION NEEDED
Turian Sixth Fleet	Act 2—Priority: The Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.
Asari Science Team	Act 2—Priority: The Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.
Asari Second Fleet	Act 2—Priority: The Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.
Asari Sixth Fleet	Act 2—Priority: The Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.
The Destiny Ascension	Act 2—Priority: The Citadel	Save the Council
STG Task Force	Act 2—Priority: The Citadel	New Salarian Councilor Saved
Salarian Third Fleet	Act 2—Priority: The Citadel	Salarian Councilor Saved
Citadel Defense Force	Act 2—Priority: The Citadel	None. Automatically unlocks.



AROUND THE GALAXY

Mission Unlocks

Citadel: GX12 Thermal Pipe (*HUB Missions*)

Mission Locks

Grissom Academy: Emergency Evacuation (*N7 Missions*)
Tuchanka: Bomb (*N7 Missions*)

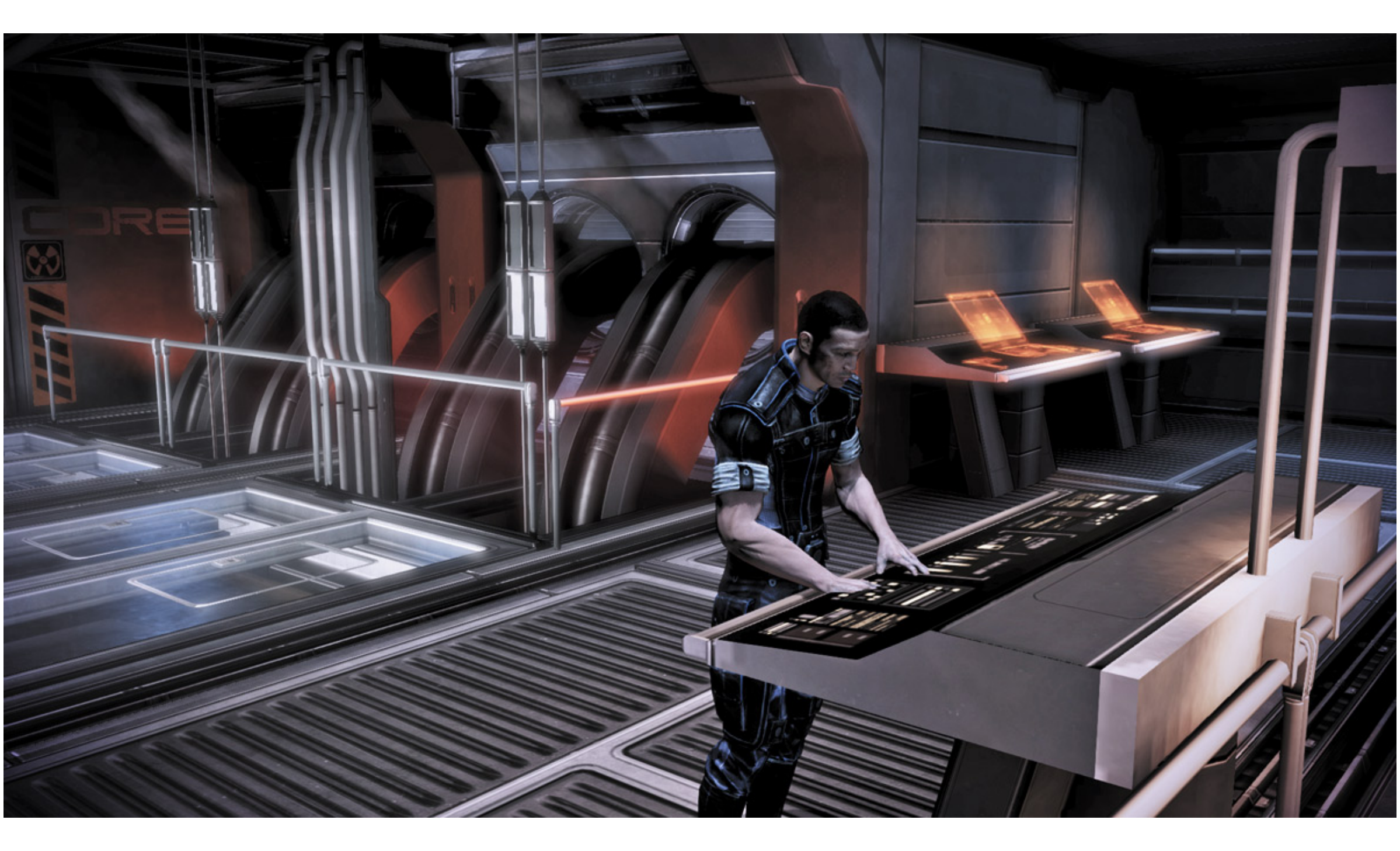
WAR PREPARATIONS

You've secured the aid of a turian fleet by enlisting the krogans to help on Palaven, the turian planet.

Your actions may have also brought the salarians (if you chose not to cure the genophage) or the resurgent Rachni (if you chose to help the Rachni creature). Now you're being called back to the Citadel to speak to the Salarian Councilor.

If you'd like to get straight to the next mission, skip to the "Visit the Citadel" section later in this guide.

SPEAK WITH ENGINEER ADAMS



Chief Engineer Adams needs a part that may come in handy on the ship. If you have the time to help him out, you can acquire it on the Citadel.

UPGRADE WEAPONS

The next act will shift focus away from the biological organisms like the Reapers and reintroduce old enemies that are more susceptible to electric powers and plasma-based weaponry.

So consider upgrading weapons that complement electricity-based combat. Also, if you have go-to weapon, now is a good time to upgrade it as well.

SPEAK WITH OTHER CREW MEMBERS

Even though you may not be able to engage them in long conversations, you can still stop by and speak with James, Specialist Traynor, and other crew members.

They won't engage you in conversations worthy of lengthy dialogue trees, but they will reveal bits and pieces of their thoughts, feelings, and other musings.

NOTE

Since the current mission requires you to visit the Citadel, you have no choice but to visit there.

As soon as you arrive, you'll engage in the mission, so any Citadel-based missions will have to wait until after this one.

COMPLETE GRISSOM ACADEMY: EMERGENCY EVACUATION

This may be your last chance to complete the Grissom Academy mission. If you engage this mission and have not completed it yet, you'll be unable to complete it afterward.

COMPLETE TUCHANKA: BOMB

If you completed "Tuchanka: Turian Platoon," then completed "Attican Traverse: Krogan Team," then this will mark the third mission since acquiring "Tuchanka: Bomb." If so, then this is also your last chance to complete "Tuchanka: Bomb" before it is no longer available.

REASSIGN POWERS

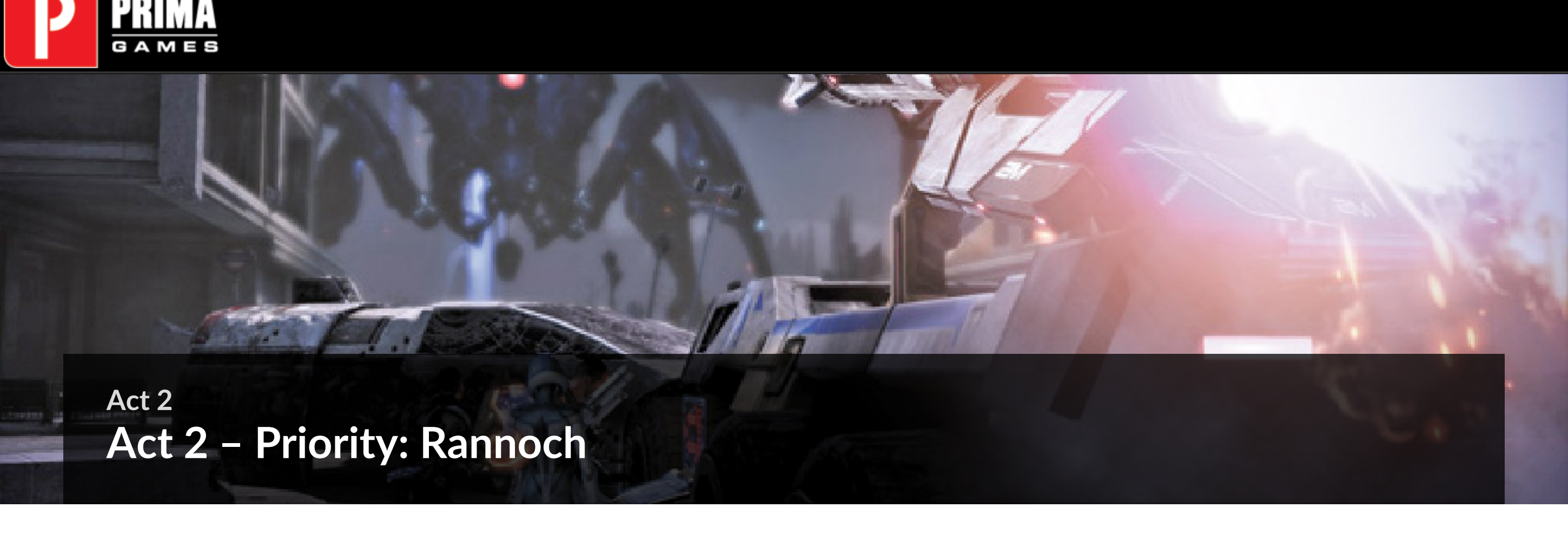
If you haven't done so already, now is also a good time to reassign powers. This isn't mandatory, but if you find that you're using certain powers more than others or some not at all, then reinvest those points in a power you will use more.

Another reason to respec your powers is to prepare for the new enemies you'll be facing in the next few missions.

You'll still face Reapers and Cerberus foes, but you'll also have to contend with the geth as well. Powers like Overload, Disrupter Ammo, and other tech-leaning powers are going to be very useful.

TIP

If you haven't reassigned your powers yet, then you can do so now, for the first time, for free. Every time after that, you'll have to pay an increasing amount of credits with every power reassignment.



Act 2 – Priority: Rannoch

The geth remain under Reaper control, thanks to a base located somewhere on the surface of Rannoch. Continue to help the quarian fleet survive the geth attack until the Reaper base can be located.

MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: No matter where you engage in battle during this mission, EDI and Tali will prove to be your best weapons. Tali must come along, forcing you to decide on the third squad member. Bring EDI, and her Decoy ability will prove very useful in nearly every encounter.

The geth facility is comprised of a series of walkways, many of them with great spots for cover. However, like the geth Dreadnought, the structure isn't overly complex or spacious. The machine's gift of efficiency allows them to utilize small walkways without the need for wide, open spaces.

Adept players will enjoy being able to combine powers in tight spaces, while snipers and Engineers can safely engage enemies from across long walkways.

Ashley's disruptor ammo allows her to rip through enemy shields and can help the whole squad if she has the squad ammo upgrade. With Tali present to remove geth shields, Liara provides excellent crowd control with her Singularity power and can take down armored enemies with Warp.

NOTE

If you imported a save where Tali is not available, then you can select any other two squad members for this mission.

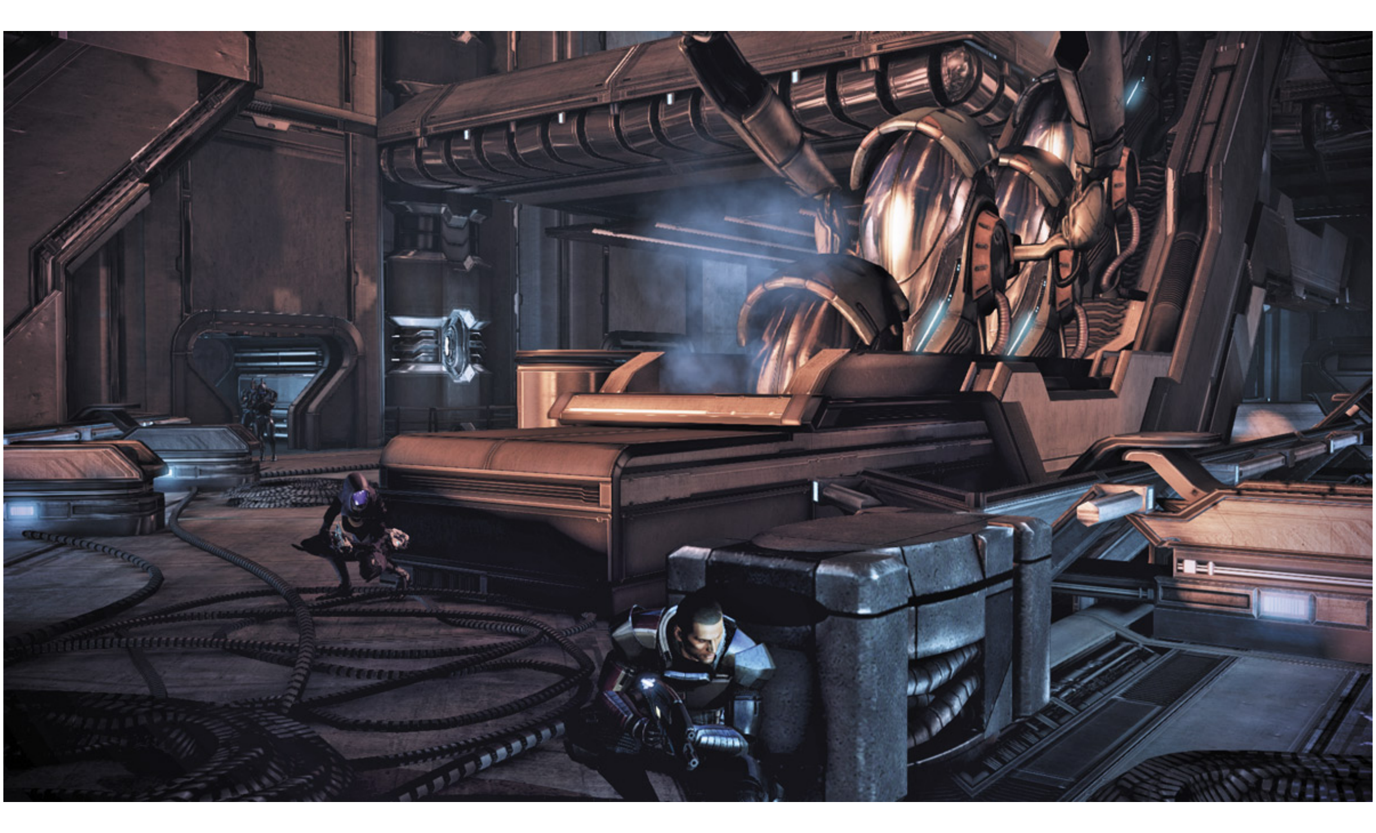
Consequence Overview: There aren't many options for Paragon/Renegade points during the mission; however, after the final battle, you'll be faced with a major decision that not only grants you Paragon/Renegade points, but also decides which new fleet you'll be bringing into the war.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Assault Rifle Piercing Mod	Kassa Fabrication Gauntlets
Assault Rifle Stability Damper	Med Kit (x2)
Data (x2)	Reaper Tech
Geth Plasma Shotgun	SMG High-Caliber Barrel
Geth Spitfire (x3)	SMG Ultralight Materials

WAR ASSETS

ASSET	BECOMES AVAILABLE	CONDITION NEEDED
Admiral Daro'Xen	Act 2—Priority: Rannoch	Side with the quarians
Geth Corps	Act 2—Priority: Rannoch	Side with the geth
Geth Fleet	Act 2—Priority: Rannoch	Side with the geth
Quarian Civilian Fleet	Act 2—Priority: Rannoch	Side with the quarians
Quarian Heavy Fleet	Act 2—Priority: Rannoch	Side with the quarians
Quarian Patrol Fleet	Act 2—Priority: Rannoch	Side with the quarians



AROUND THE GALAXY

Mission Unlocks

None

Mission Locks

Rannoch: Admiral Koris (See Campaign Section)
Rannoch: Geth Fighter Squadrons (See Campaign Section)

WAR PREPARATIONS

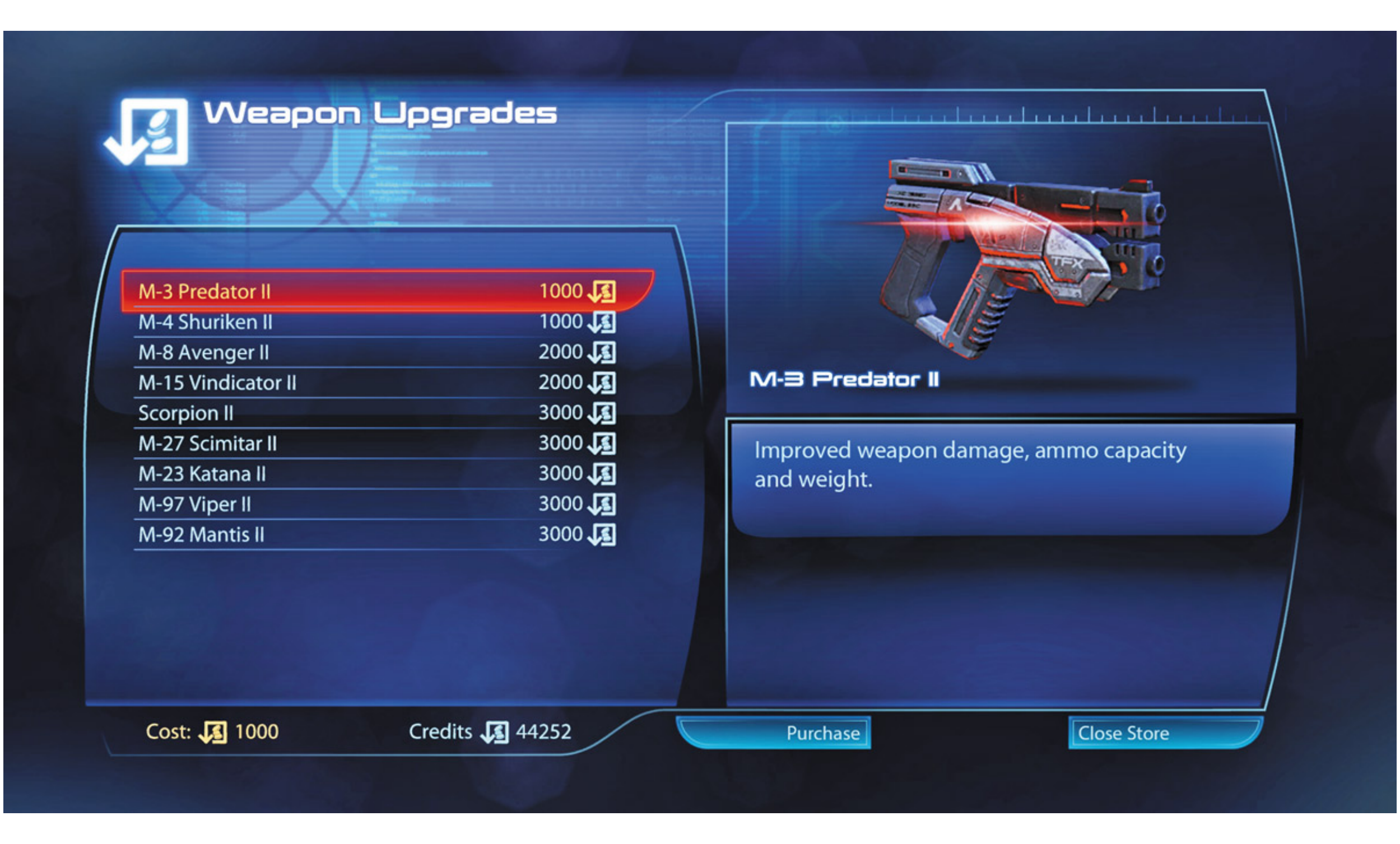
As the war heats up, things around the Normandy and the Citadel begin to cool down. There are no new missions to pick up, so feel free to either turn in any side missions you've completed to the Citadel or travel across the galaxy to complete missions before it's too late. If you completed only one of the two previous missions, you can take this time to complete the second. Once you begin this mission, the other one disappears.

If you'd like to get straight to the next mission, skip to the "Reaper Base" section later in this guide.

ABOARD THE NORMANDY

Tali and Admiral Xen are in the midst of a fierce disagreement in the war room. Listen to what they're talking about and either support Tali or the Admiral. If you support Tali, you'll gain Paragon points. Support Admiral Xen for Renegade points.

UPGRADE WEAPONS



Weapon Upgrades

M-3 Predator II	1000
M-4 Shuriken II	1000
M-8 Avenger II	2000
M-15 Vindicator II	2000
Scorpion II	3000
M-27 Scimitar II	3000
M-23 Katana II	3000
M-97 Viper II	3000
M-92 Mantis II	3000

M-3 Predator II

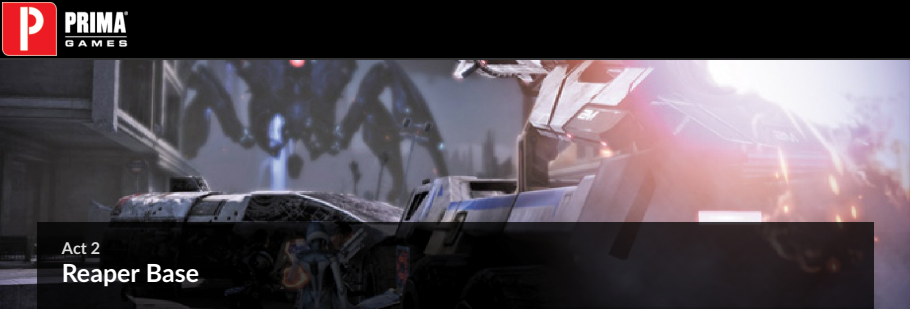
Improved weapon damage, ammo capacity and weight.

Cost: 1000 Credits 44252

Now is another good time to invest in weapon upgrades. Many of the upcoming battles will be against multiple types of enemies at once, such as geth Hunters, geth Rocket Troopers, and geth Prime, so upgrade any new weapons that you have taken a liking to. Weapons like the Arc Pistol, which is specifically designed to be used against artificial life-forms, will be of great help.

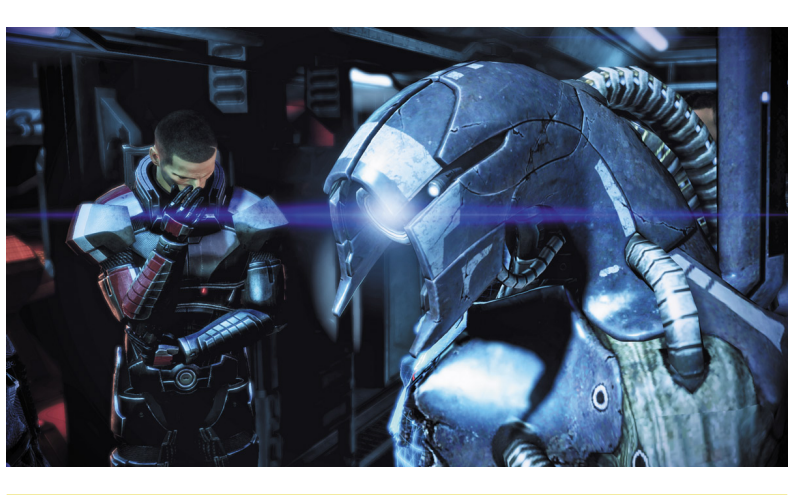
REASSIGN POWERS

If you've already reassigned your powers once for free, reassigning your powers again will cost you only 5,000 credits. It is well worth it if you've invested points in powers you don't frequently use. Spend the credits now and reassign your powers so that you maximize the value out of every point.



Act 2

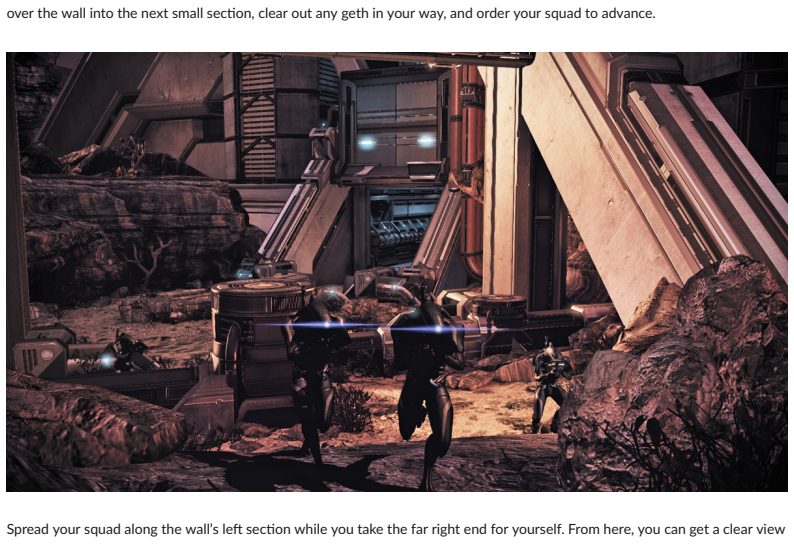
Reaper Base



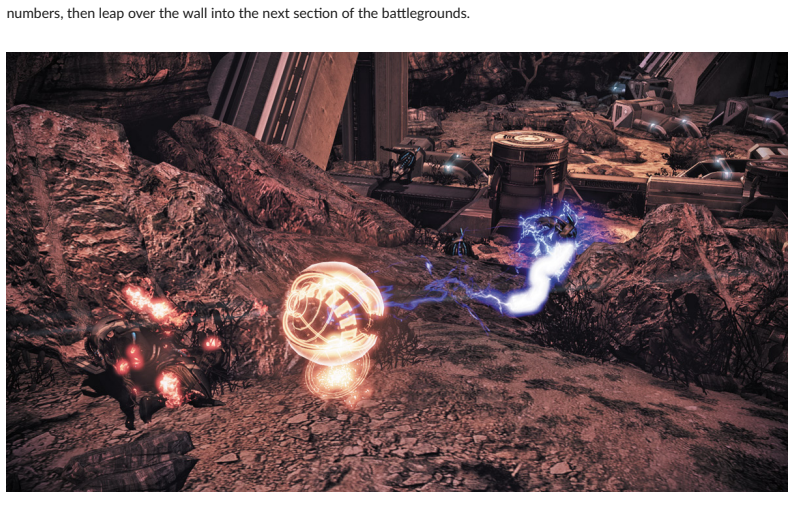
NOTE

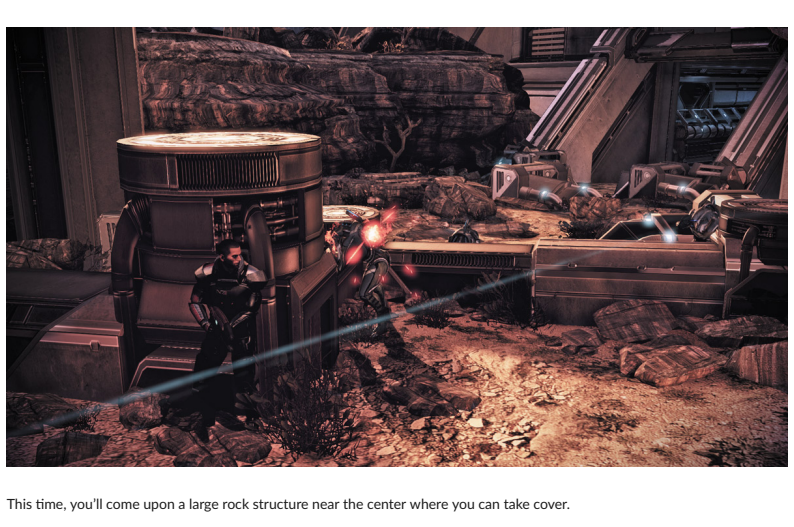
While on approach to the landing site, the Geth VI reveals that it still has Reaper components integrated into its system. Upon landing, Tali cannot help but become emotional. She's one of the few quarians to set foot on her home planet, and she's feeling hopeful about the outcome of this mission.

The Reaper base is heavily defended by geth still carrying Reaper code and enhancements, so you're greeted by a large squad of geth guarding the entrance to the base. Take cover behind the small partition and order your squad to do the same. Leap over the wall into the next small section, clear out any geth in your way, and order your squad to advance.



Spread your squad along the wall's left section while you take the far right end for yourself. From here, you can get a clear view of the enemies' left side while your squadmates engage them head-on. Use power combinations to weaken the geth's numbers, then leap over the wall into the next section of the battlegrounds.

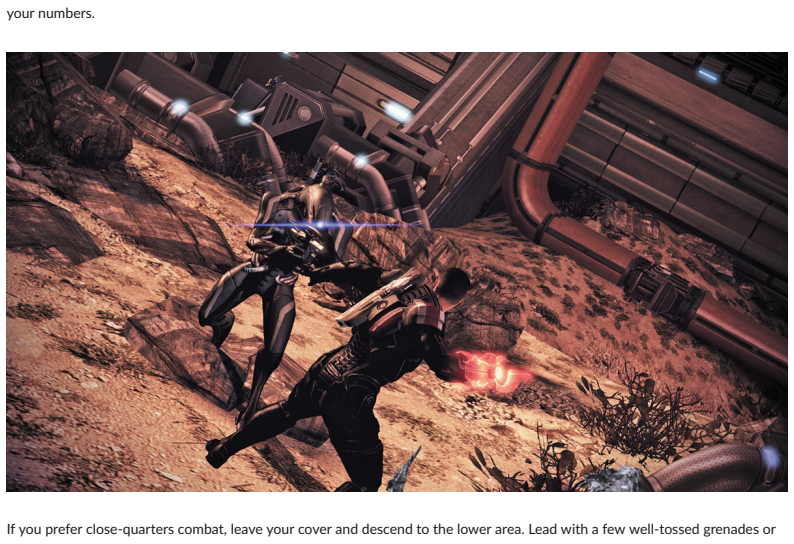




This time, you'll come upon a large rock structure near the center where you can take cover.

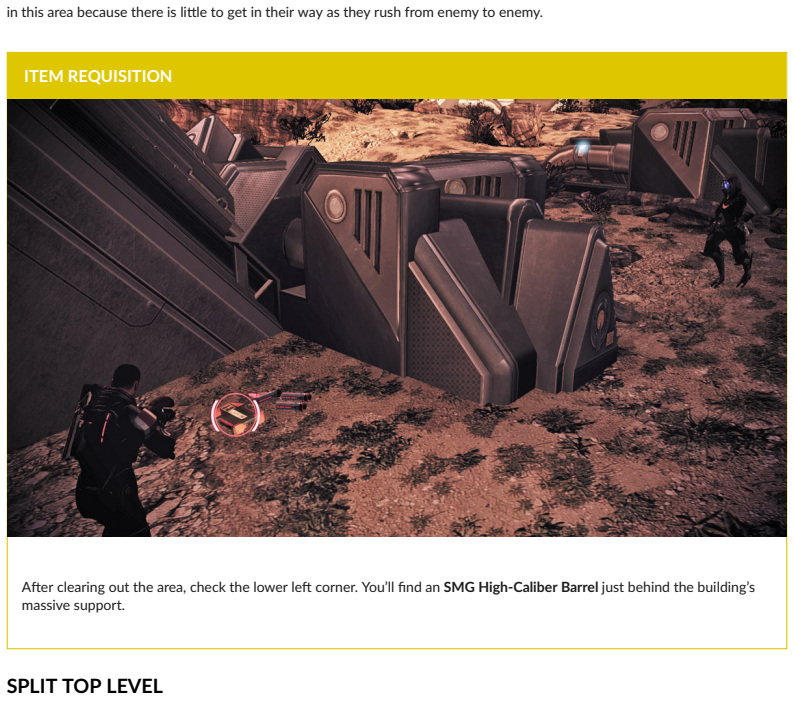
Once again, reach cover and wait for the geth to give you a clear shot. From here, you can either continue to engage nearby enemies or equip a sniper rifle and start picking off the geth near the bottom of the battlegrounds area. As you eliminate enemy forces, more come charging in from the far lower end of the base's entrance.

Use Tali's drones to attack the geth and give them a fourth target. If you've brought EDI, activate her Decoy ability to increase your numbers.



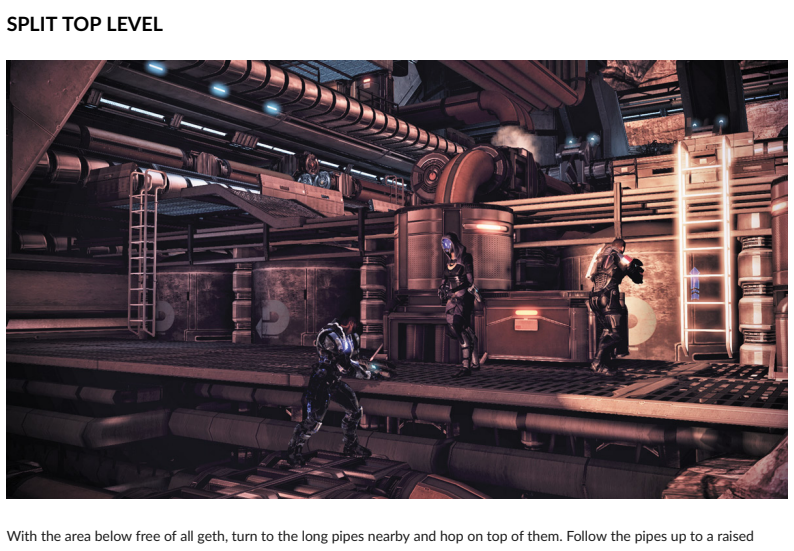
If you prefer close-quarters combat, leave your cover and descend to the lower area. Lead with a few well-tossed grenades or other explosive power combinations to whittle down their numbers, and switch to a good close- to medium-range weapon. Melee combatants can also rush down and engage the geth in melee combat. Vanguards and Sentinels will have the advantage in this area because there is little to get in their way as they rush from enemy to enemy.

ITEM REQUISITION



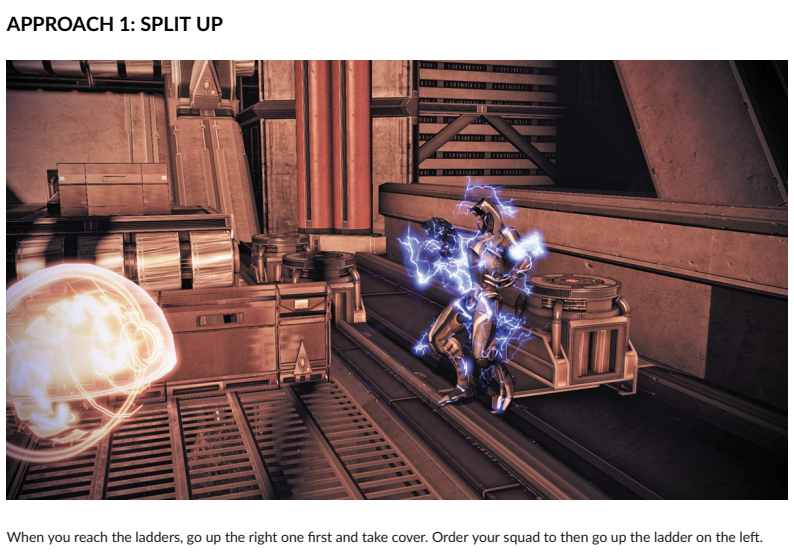
After clearing out the area, check the lower left corner. You'll find an **SMG High-Caliber Barrel** just behind the building's massive support.

SPLIT TOP LEVEL

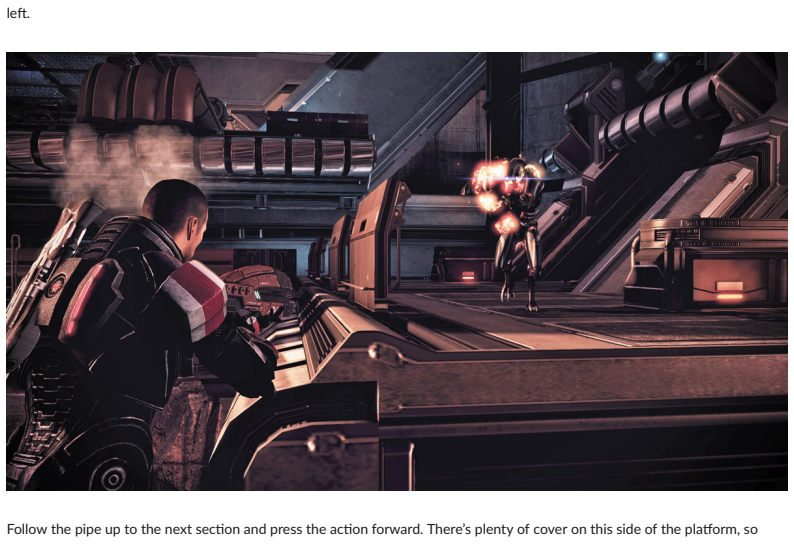


With the area below free of all geth, turn to the long pipes nearby and hop on top of them. Follow the pipes up to a raised platform on the right. This area has two ladders, each one reaching the top platform. Since the platform is split in the center you essentially have two short paths, one starting at the left ladder, another starting at the right ladder.

APPROACH 1: SPLIT UP



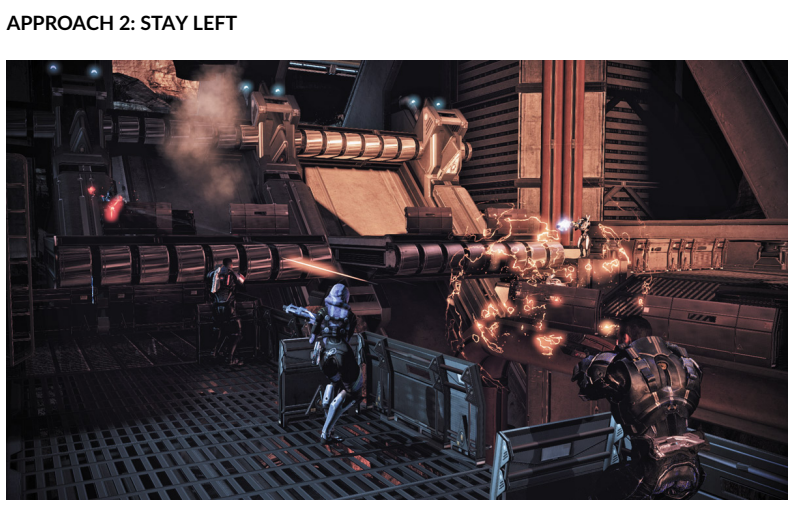
When you reach the ladders, go up the right one first and take cover. Order your squad to then go up the ladder on the left. You now have the entire top platform covered. Before you proceed, eliminate the nearest geth, then rush up the pipe on the left.

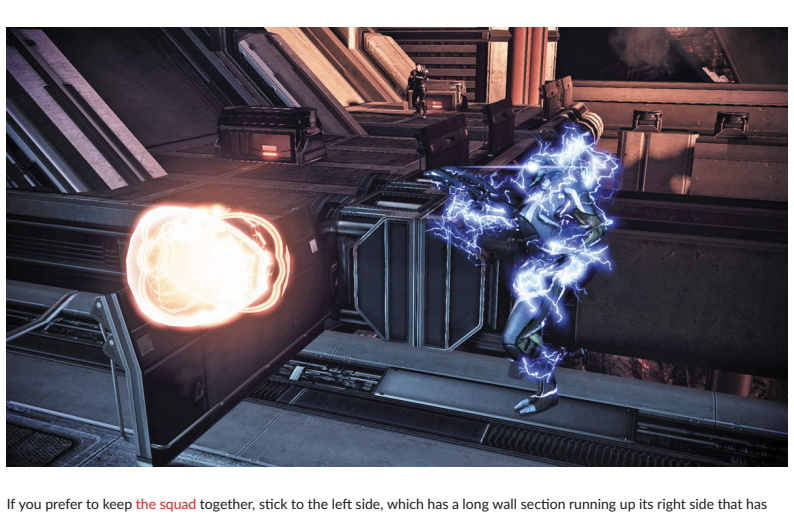


Follow the pipe up to the next section and press the action forward. There's plenty of cover on this side of the platform, so don't stay out in the open too long. Since your two squadmates are covering the far left side, order Tali to release a drone near your position to even up the numbers.

Stalk the geth near the platform's far end, and move up the right platform at the same time that you move your squad up the left. Keep a slow, steady approach forward until you've cleared both sides of the platform.

APPROACH 2: STAY LEFT

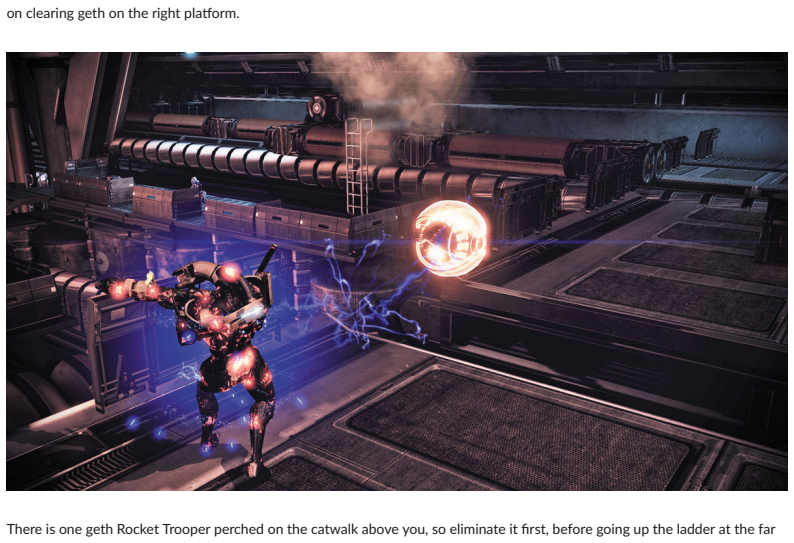




If you prefer to keep the squad together, stick to the left side, which has a long wall section running up its right side that has small intersecting partitions. Use these partitions as cover for yourself and the crew to leapfrog up the length of the platform.

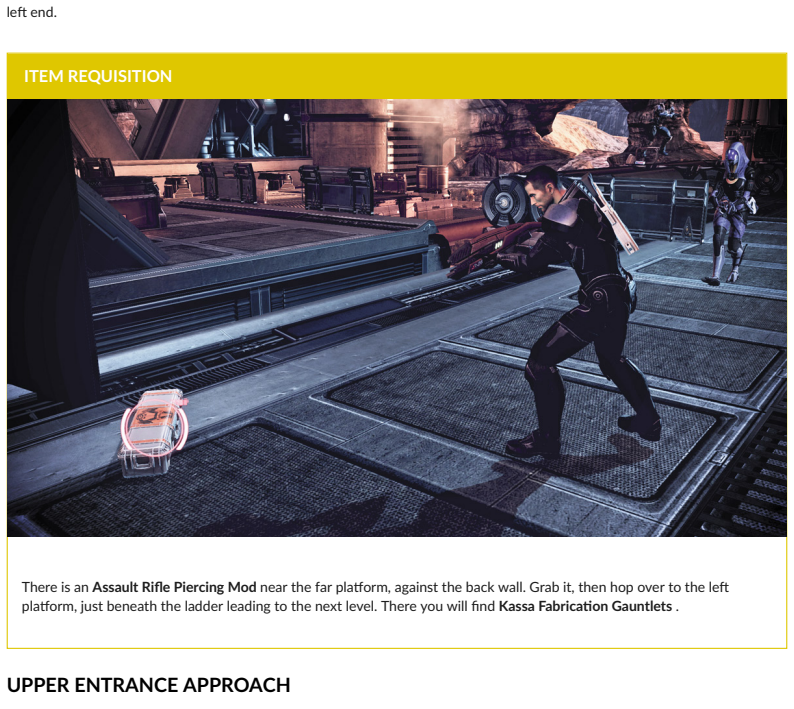
Send drones or decoys ahead to slow and stun your enemies. If you brought Liara, this is a great time to unleash a Singularity field near the far end. Carefully move from cover to cover, picking off enemies as you go, and clear the entire area.

If you take too much incoming fire from the right side, order your squad to eliminate foes on the far end while you concentrate on clearing geth on the right platform.



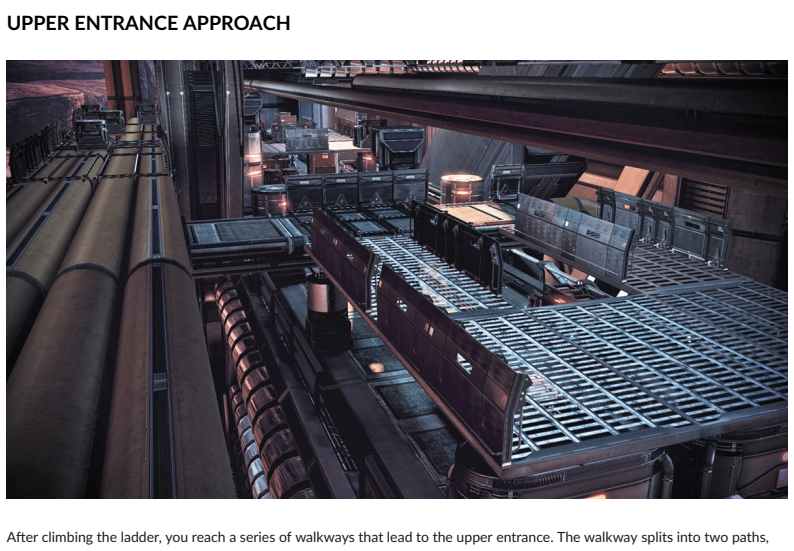
There is one geth Rocket Trooper perched on the catwalk above you, so eliminate it first, before going up the ladder at the far left end.

ITEM REQUISITION



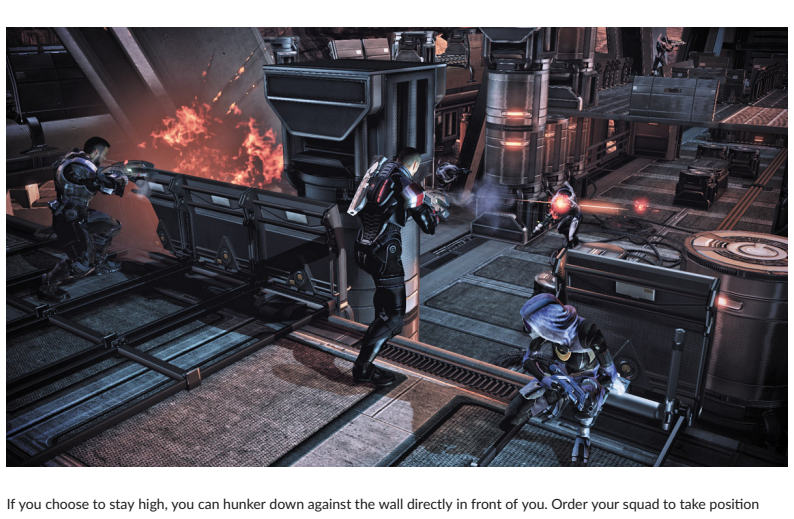
There is an **Assault Rifle Piercing Mod** near the far platform, against the back wall. Grab it, then hop over to the left platform, just beneath the ladder leading to the next level. There you will find **Kassa Fabrication Gauntlets** .

UPPER ENTRANCE APPROACH



After climbing the ladder, you reach a series of walkways that lead to the upper entrance. The walkway splits into two paths, one below and another along a series of pipes on the left side. However, you can approach this section of battle three different ways.

APPROACH 1: DEATH FROM ABOVE

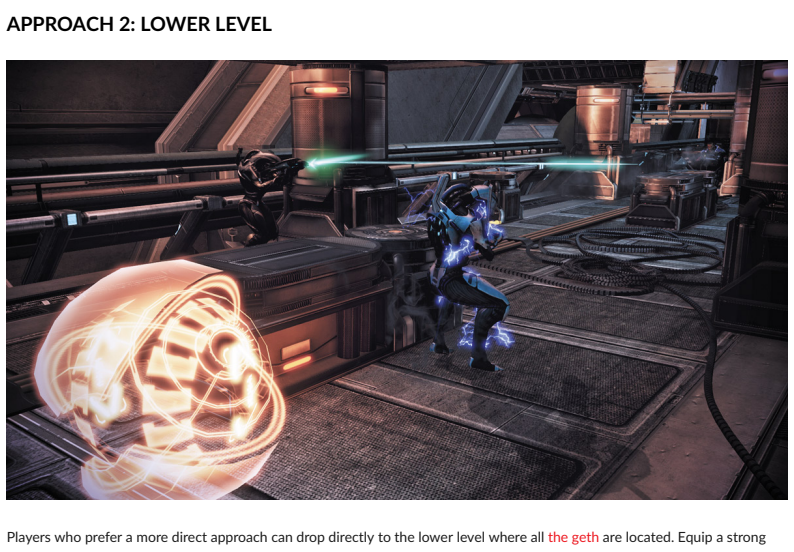


If you choose to stay high, you can hunker down against the wall directly in front of you. Order your squad to take position either to your left or right, while you rain down death on the geth below. The geth will try to scramble from cover to cover, but they can't fight their nature. They'll constantly try to advance on you and leave themselves open to attack.

If any geth attempt to attack from behind you or to circumvent your position, free up one of your squad members to deal with them. As always, Tali's drones are perfect for keeping pressure on the geth below.

After destroying the first few geth near you, equip a medium- to long-range weapon and begin picking off the geth Rocket Troopers that attack from the far end. This approach is better suited for long-range fighters with sniper rifles. Adept players will also do well in this approach, since they can mix up powers both at a distance and close-range, if necessary.

APPROACH 2: LOWER LEVEL

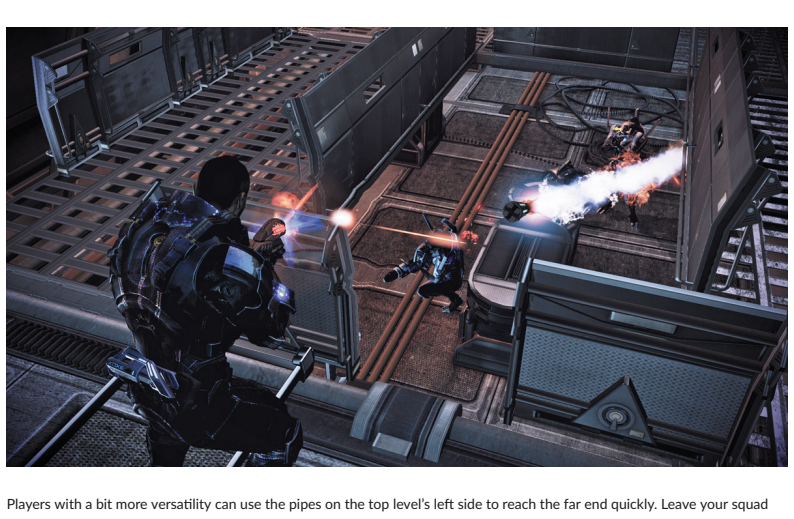


Players who prefer a more direct approach can drop directly to the lower level where all the geth are located. Equip a strong medium- to close-range weapon and slowly press the action up the lower level. The geth will attempt to take cover as you approach, but you can easily flush them out with powers like Singularity or Defensive Drones.

This approach is also well suited for Infiltrators specializing in melee combat, Vanguards, and Sentinels. With a shotgun in hand and little to get in your way, you can move quickly between enemies, blasting them up close and finishing them off with melee attacks.

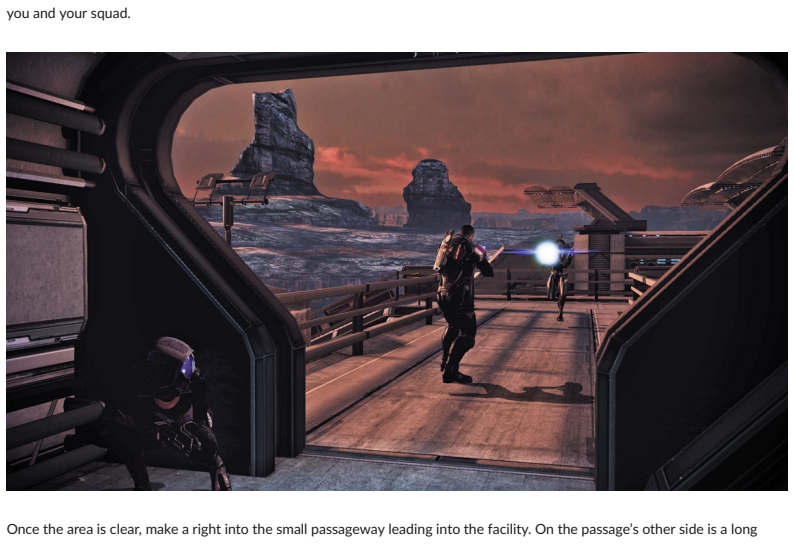
When the geth Rocket Troopers are the only foes left, eliminate their ranged advantage by rushing them, and engage them in close-quarters combat. Use grenades if you have them; otherwise, stick to power combinations and heavy firepower.

APPROACH 3: RUN THE PIPES



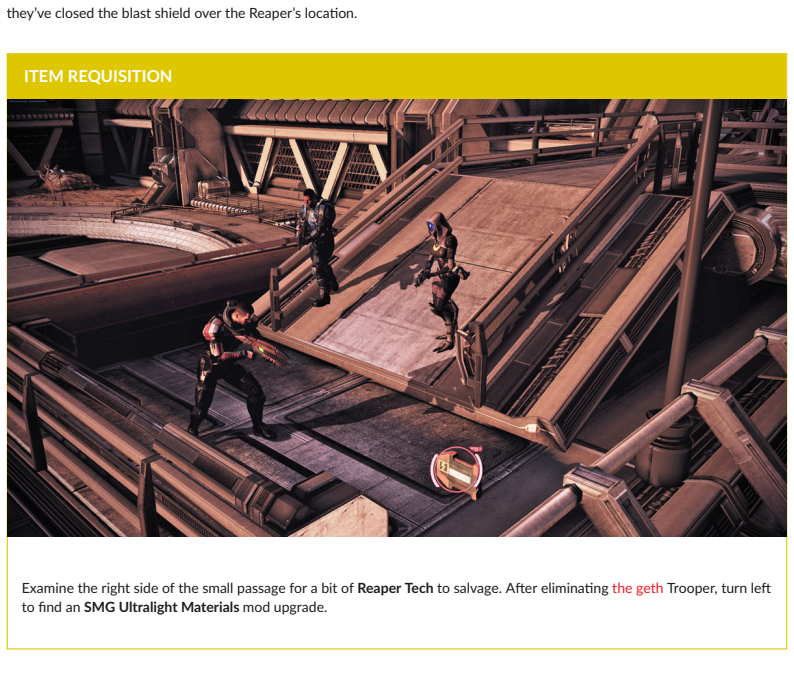
Players with a bit more versatility can use the pipes on the top level's left side to reach the far end quickly. Leave your squad near the entrance (you can even order one squad member to take the lower level), while you rush across the pipes on the far left.

Open fire on enemies to your right as you go to weaken them and make them easy prey for your squad. When you reach the far end, either eliminate the geth Rocket Troopers from your elevated position or drop down and rush them up close. The goal is to clear the far end quickly, then turn around and face the length of the walkway to pinch any remaining enemies between you and your squad.

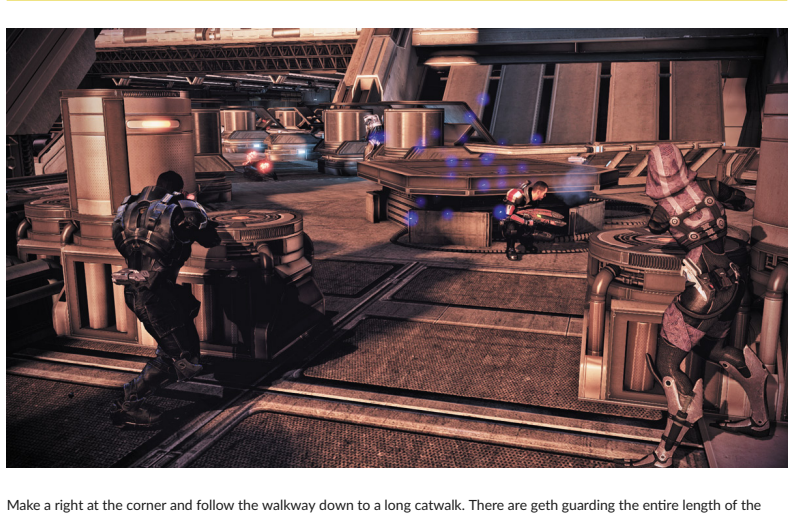


Once the area is clear, make a right into the small passageway leading into the facility. On the passage's other side is a long Geth Trooper. Take it down quickly and exit the passage. By now the geth are aware of your plans to destroy the base, so they've closed the blast shield over the Reaper's location.

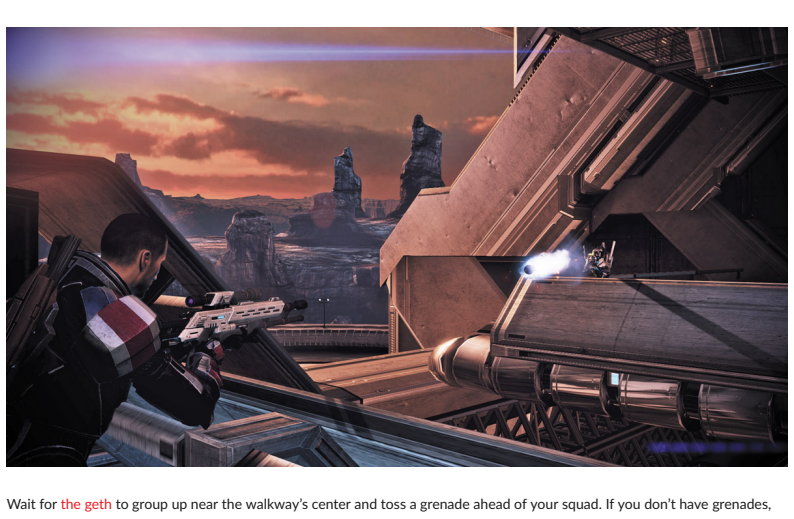
ITEM REQUISITION



Examine the right side of the small passage for a bit of **Reaper Tech** to salvage. After eliminating the geth Trooper, turn left to find an **SMG Ultralight Materials** mod upgrade.



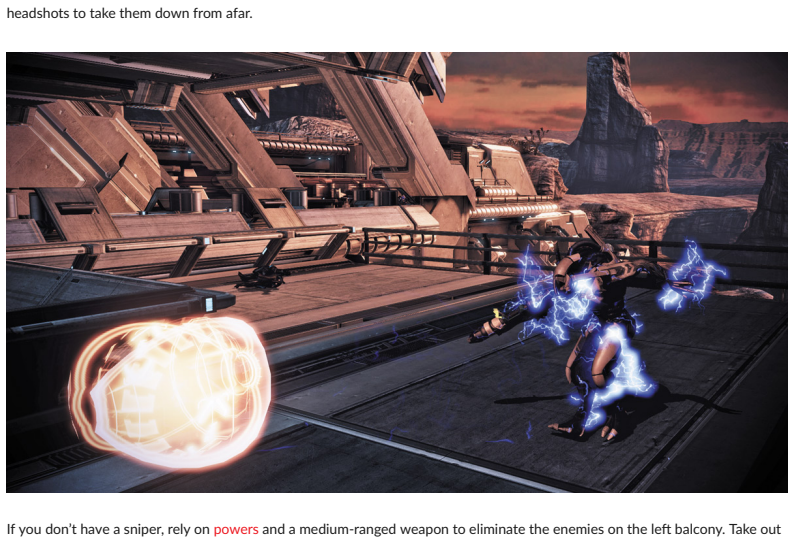
Make a right at the corner and follow the walkway down to a long catwalk. There are geth guarding the entire length of the walkway ahead, so take cover behind the tablelike structure at the walkway's entrance and position your crew behind the left and right partitions jutting out of the sides of the walkway.



Wait for the geth to group up near the walkway's center and toss a grenade ahead of your squad. If you don't have grenades, use a disruptive power like Shockwave, or hit the group with Singularity. Send your crew down the hall to mow down the remaining geth, then rush down the walkway behind the cover of your crew.

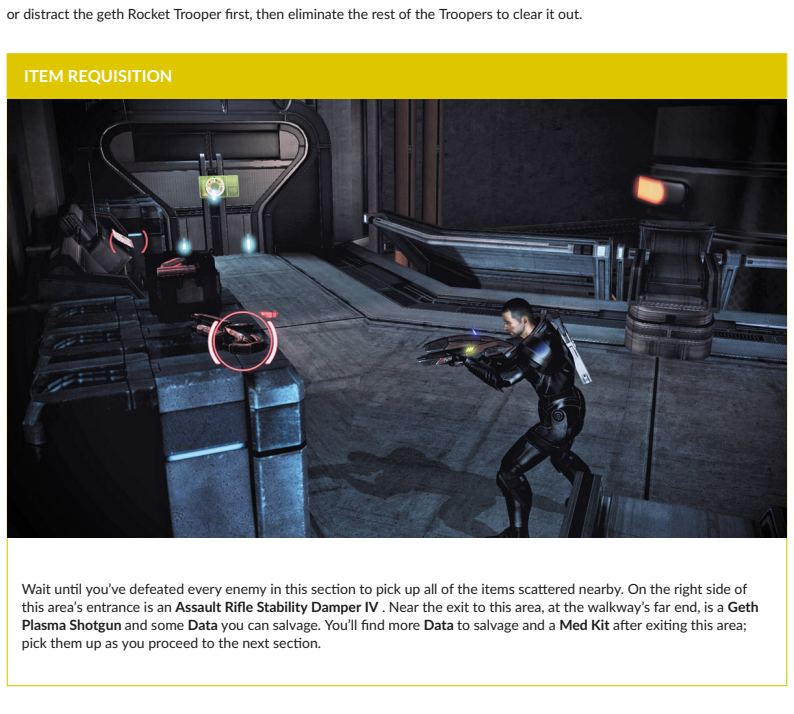
Since the walkway has a series of partitions running down its sides, you can leapfrog your squad safely and easily. Stay behind cover as much as possible and lead with power combinations, grenades, or drones. EDI's Decoy is also a great help as you rush down the walkway.

Reach the far end and turn your attention to the balcony on the left side. The geth in the balcony can't leave their position, so use your best long-range attacks to take them out. If you have a sniper rifle, equip it now and string together a series of headshots to take them down from afar.



If you don't have a sniper, rely on powers and a medium-ranged weapon to eliminate the enemies on the left balcony. Take out or distract the geth Rocket Trooper first, then eliminate the rest of the Troopers to clear it out.

ITEM REQUISITION



Wait until you've defeated every enemy in this section to pick up all of the items scattered nearby. On the right side of this area's entrance is an **Assault Rifle Stability Damper IV** . Near the exit to this area, at the walkway's far end, is a **Geth Plasma Shotgun** and some **Data** you can salvage. You'll find more **Data** to salvage and a **Med Kit** after exiting this area; pick them up as you proceed to the next section.

Exit through the door on the right and follow the halls to the next section of the facility. In order to retract the blast shield, you'll need to hit the override switch on the shield. Turn left as soon as you enter this area, and sprint to the override console near the far edge.

When you hit the override button, the area nearby begins to fill up with geth. The Geth VI needs you to buy some time while it bypasses the security systems. Retreat a bit to the area where you entered. It has only one point of entry, near the override console, and is very defensible. Station your two squadmates near the section of walkway by the console and begin fending off attacking geth.

They won't all rush your position at once, so you can pick them off one by one, or even two at a time if they get too close. Send out decoys and drones to draw fire away from your position, and occasionally venture out of cover to blast nearby geth.

If you spy a geth Pyro approaching, meet it head-on. It's better to localize its fire on only one of you than to let it get close to the entire squad and allow it to scorch you all at once. Rush the Pyro and quickly knock it off balance, then follow up with weapons fire to extinguish the fiery geth.

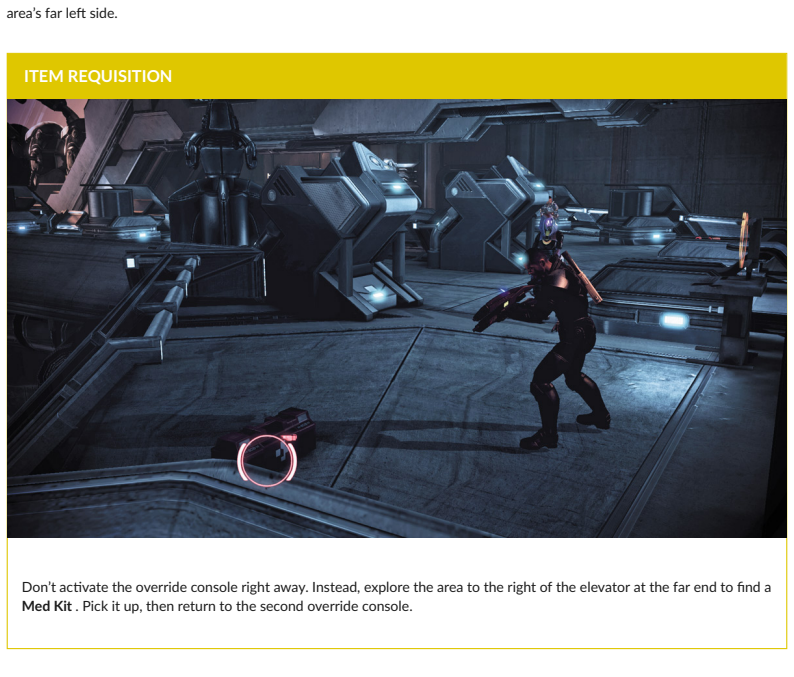
CAUTION

Watch out for geth proximity mines in this area. Trip one and you can sustain substantial damage.

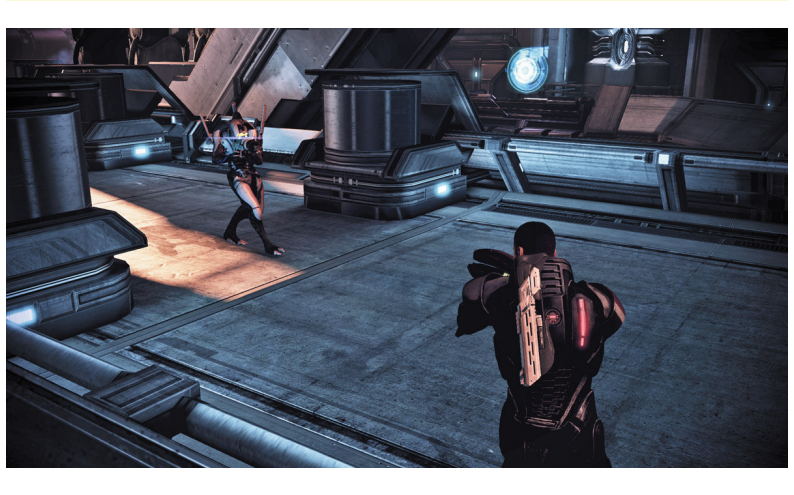
If you favor long-range attacks, leave your squad by the override console and back up to the area where you entered this section of the facility. Aim your weapon across the gap to the center walkway and open fire.

Eliminate all of the enemies and survive long enough for the Geth VI to bypass security on the second override console at the area's far left side.

ITEM REQUISITION

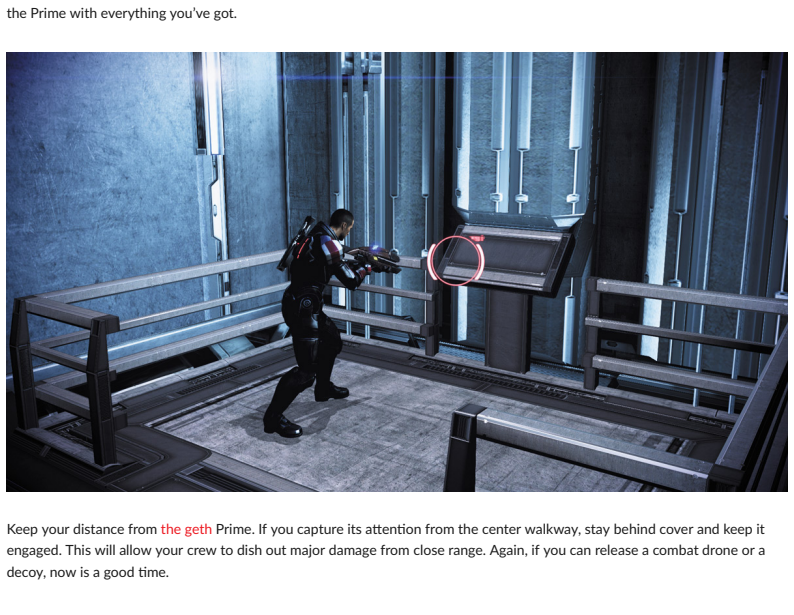


Don't activate the override console right away. Instead, explore the area to the right of the elevator at the far end to find a **Med Kit** . Pick it up, then return to the second override console.



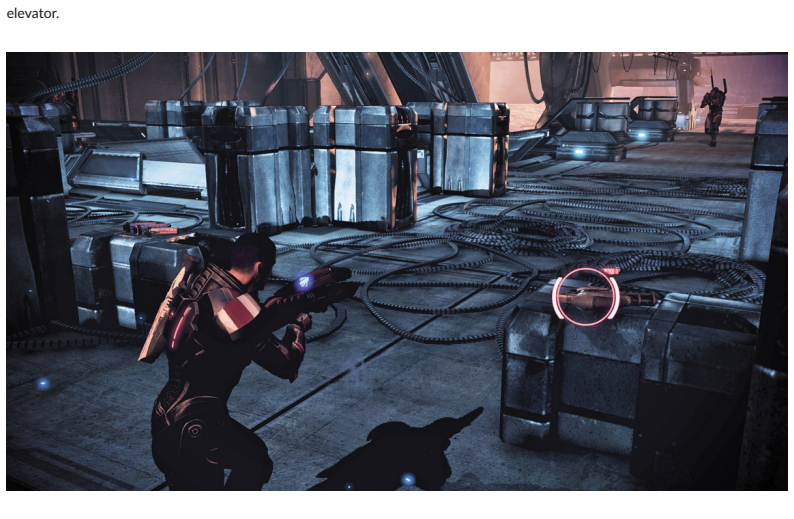
Activating the second override console gets the attention of a geth Prime and a pair of geth Rocket Troopers. Leave your squad members to guard the far left passage near the second override console, while you backtrack to the center lane and get a direct path straight to the elevator.

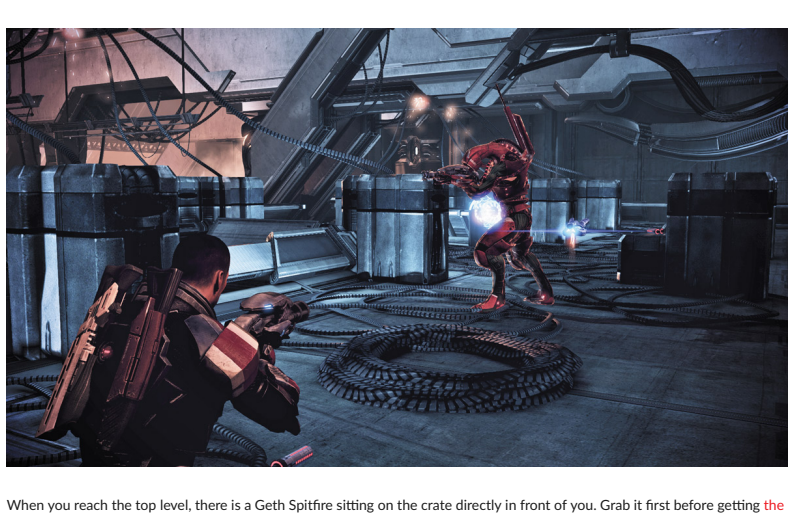
Pick apart the Rocket Trooper first, while your squad engages the Prime; then slowly press forward, toward the elevator and hit the Prime with everything you've got.



Keep your distance from the geth Prime. If you capture its attention from the center walkway, stay behind cover and keep it engaged. This will allow your crew to dish out major damage from close range. Again, if you can release a combat drone or a decoy, now is a good time.

Take the elevator to the level above you after destroying the geth Prime and quickly rush to cover as soon as you exit the elevator.

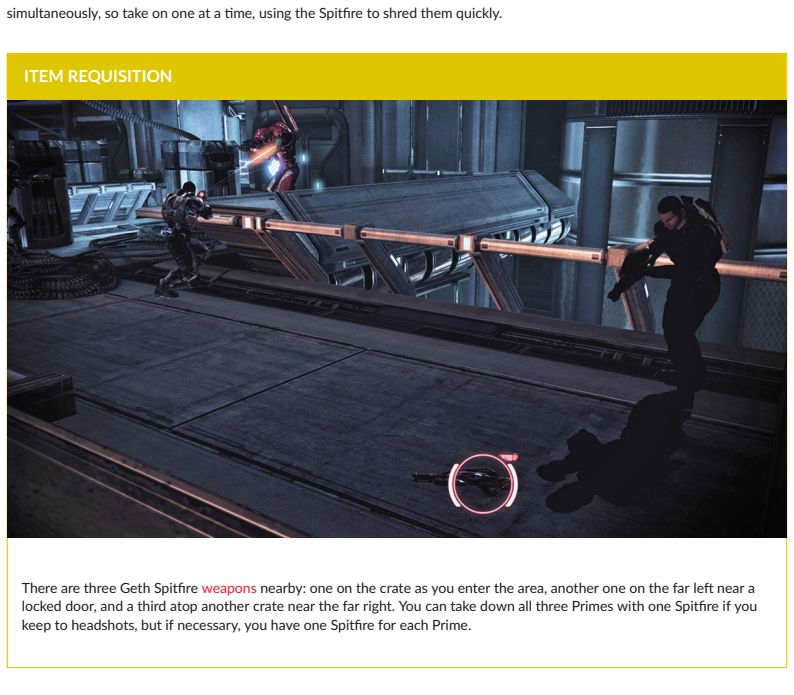




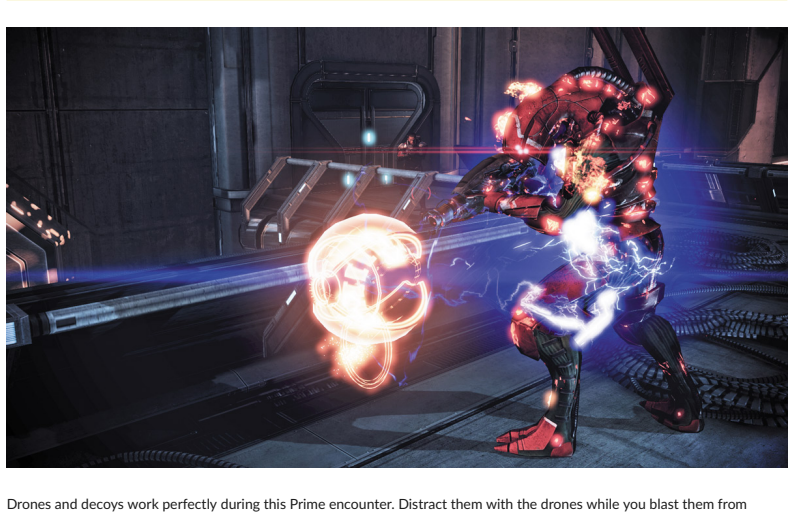
When you reach the top level, there is a Geth Spitfire sitting on the crate directly in front of you. Grab it first before getting the geth Prime's attention near the far end. The Prime will notice you quickly when you pick up the Spitfire, so stay behind cover and sic your squad on the Prime to distract it.

Pop out of cover when the Prime engages your team, and lay it to waste with the Spitfire. You'll face three geth Primes simultaneously, so take on one at a time, using the Spitfire to shred them quickly.

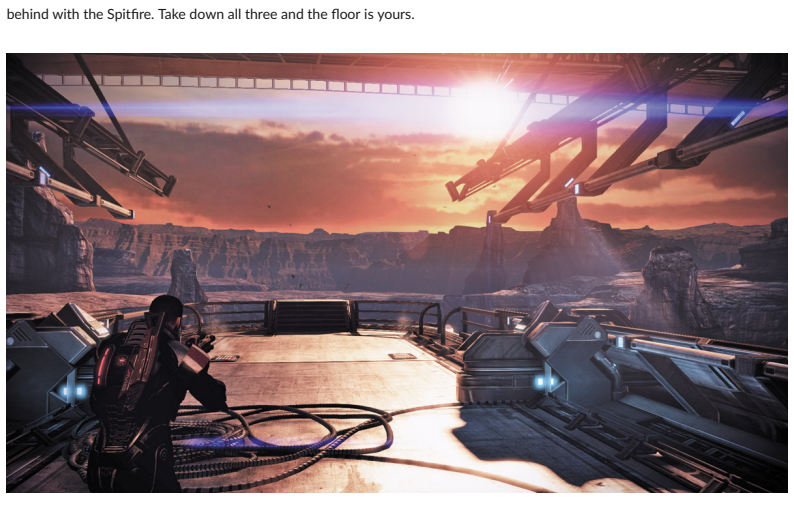
ITEM REQUISITION



There are three Geth Spitfire weapons nearby: one on the crate as you enter the area, another one on the far left near a locked door, and a third atop another crate near the far right. You can take down all three Primes with one Spitfire if you keep to headshots, but if necessary, you have one Spitfire for each Prime.



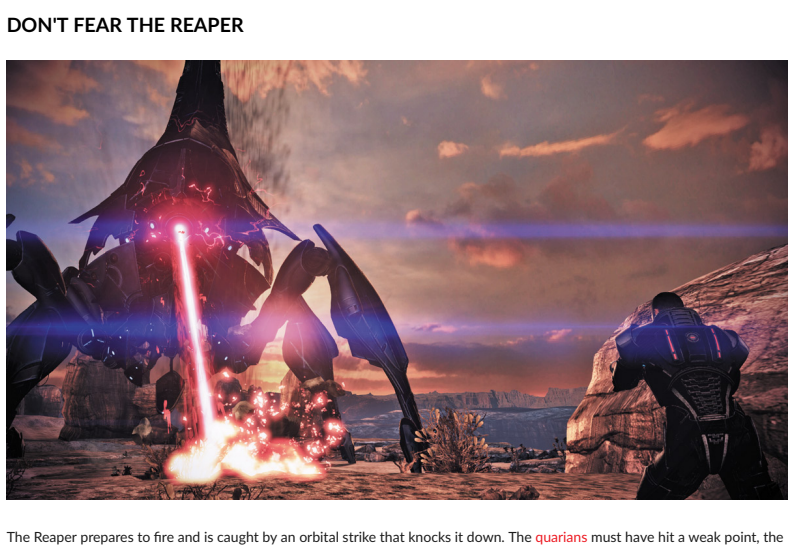
Drones and decoys work perfectly during this Prime encounter. Distract them with the drones while you blast them from behind with the Spitfire. Take down all three and the floor is yours.



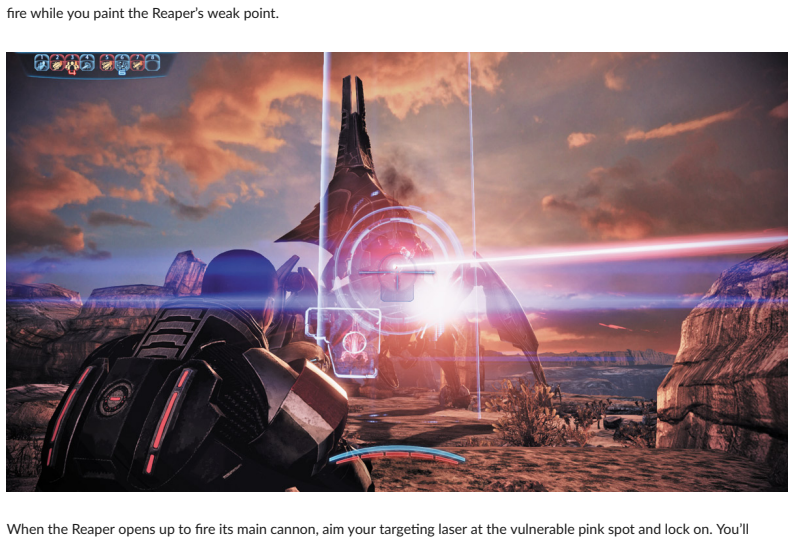
Walk up to the ledge at the far end of the center walkway and take out your targeting weapon. Aim it down at the Reaper station. Wait for it to lock onto the red node and the Normandy bombs the target. The destruction frees a Reaper hidden below the station, but it is too massive for you to engage on foot.

Sprint to the left, and make a beeline to the hovercraft where the Geth VI is waiting to rescue you and the squad. The massive Reaper machine begins to stomp after you as you get away in the hovercraft. One blast of its central cannon and it crashes your escape.

DON'T FEAR THE REAPER



The Reaper prepares to fire and is caught by an orbital strike that knocks it down. The quarians must have hit a weak point, the targeting chamber, only visible as the Reaper prepares to fire. The admirals urge you to escape, but that will leave them to die at the hands of the geth. You get out of the hovercraft and sync the targeting laser to the entire quarian fleet. They prepare to fire while you paint the Reaper's weak point.



When the Reaper opens up to fire its main cannon, aim your targeting laser at the vulnerable pink spot and lock on. You'll notice the blue radial light hone in on your target as the Reaper continues to charge. When the light completely locks on the target (the radial light will shrink to a pinpoint), the fleet fires on the Reaper and knocks it off balance.

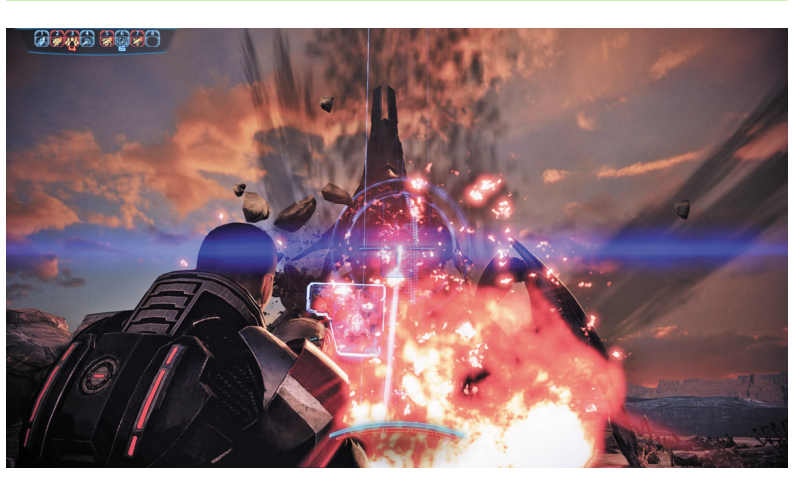
The first attack on the Reaper is a free shot. The massive machine was getting its bearings while you were free to zoom in and lock onto it. The Reaper's next shot, however, will be aimed directly at you. Give yourself some space to maneuver by rushing to the right side of the ledge you're standing on and turn to face the Reaper.

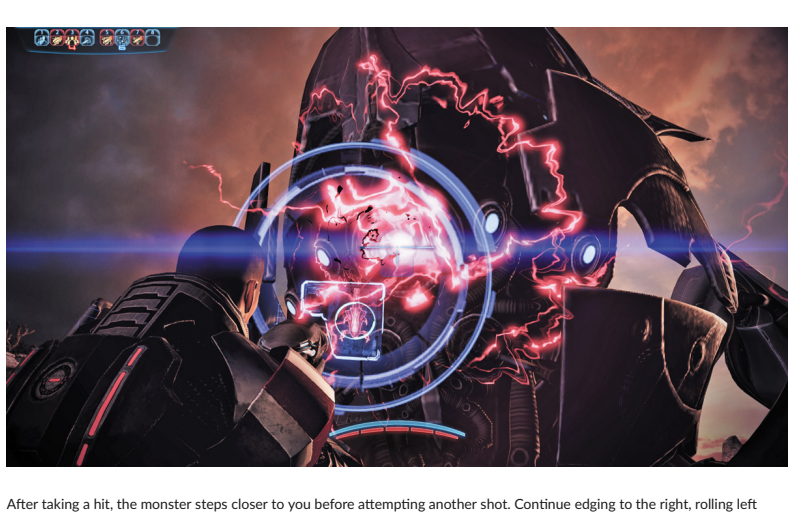
When it begins to charge again, lock onto the machine's cannon. Let the Reaper fire its cannon, then execute an evasive roll to the left as the laser beam cuts a path toward you. Resume your targeting lock on the machine until the fleet can completely lock on and fire at it a second time.

TIP

Don't worry about rolling to evade when your lock is almost complete. The weapon will remember lock status, and you will be able to complete the lock as soon as you finish rolling.

The Reaper's laser fires more accurately at higher difficulties. If playing on regular difficulty, you only need to move once the Reaper starts firing to avoid getting hit. At the higher difficulty levels, dodging too early will cause the Reaper to track your movements and adjust its attacks—you will need to wait until the beam is closer to you before rolling to the side.





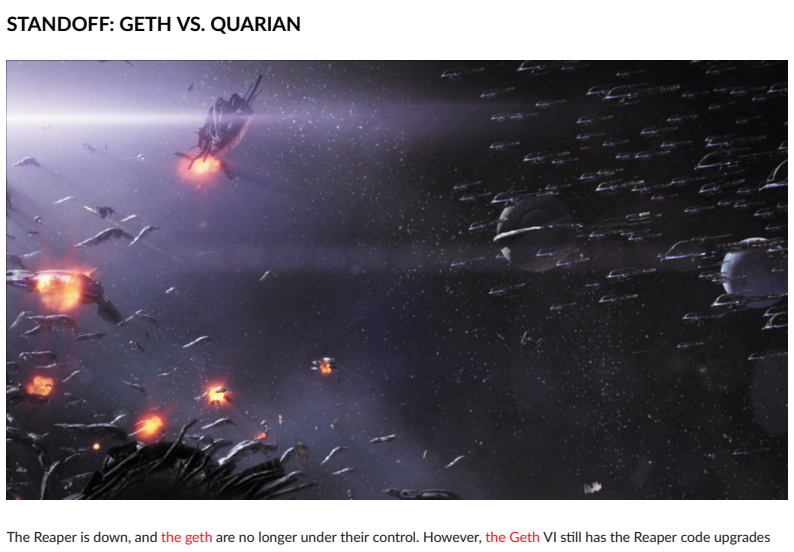
After taking a hit, the monster steps closer to you before attempting another shot. Continue edging to the right, rolling left evasively and painting the target until it's taken two more shots from the fleet.

Eventually, the Reaper is directly on top of you, allowing you to get one final shot on its laser cannon. Lock on one last time and the fleet unloads everything on the Reaper, putting it down for good.

Even though it has fallen, the massive Reaper still insists you will be defeated. As you stand there, in front of the skyscraper-sized machine, you can engage it in a conversation. Attempt to reason with it for Paragon points or stand up to it for Renegade points.

Regardless of your response, the Reaper remains adamant that you and the rest of the organic creatures will be destroyed. If you chose the Renegade response at first, you'll also get a chance to follow up with another Renegade response during the conversation.

STANDOFF: GETH VS. QUARIAN



The Reaper is down, and the geth are no longer under their control. However, the Geth VI still has the Reaper code upgrades integrated into its system. With no puppeteer pulling their strings, the Geth VI suggests unloading the Reaper code to the remaining geth across the quarian system.

The upgrade would grant the geth true free will and make them capable of choosing sides against the Reapers. If you choose to upload the code, you'll gain the geth and accept potential consequences. However, Tali insists that this is a bad idea. The new, upgraded geth could decimate the quarians! If you choose to listen to Tali's pleas, you'll let the geth die but will retain the quarian fleet's support.

The choice is yours.

TIP

There is a way to reach a truce between the geth and the quarians and retain both their fleets for the Galaxy at War, but this requires that you met very specific circumstances during the events of Mass Effect 2. In order to bring out peace between the geth and the quarians during this encounter, you must:

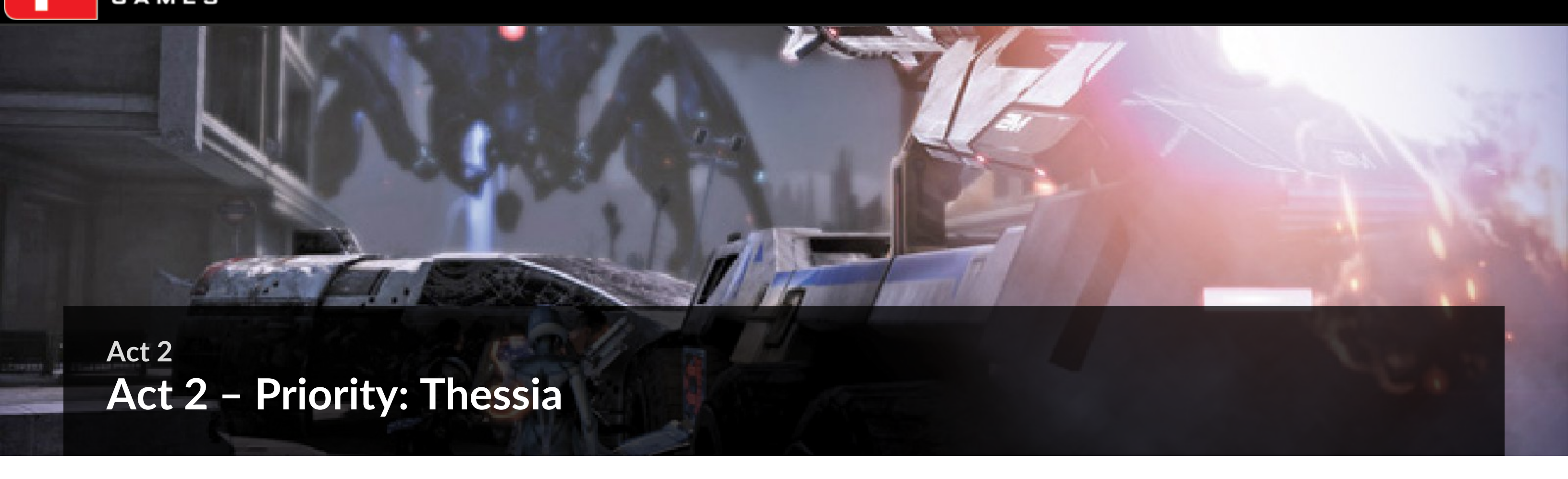
- Keep Tali alive through Mass Effect 2.
- Kill the heretics during Legion's loyalty mission, "A House Divided," in Mass Effect 2.
- Keep Legion alive during Mass Effect 2
- Complete "Geth Fighter Squadrons" mission.

If these are all true, you then gain "points" for the following:

- Complete "Rannoch: Admiral Koris" (+1 point)
- Save Admiral Koris during "Rannoch: Admiral Koris" (+1 point)
- Save Tali from exile in Mass Effect 2 (+2 points)
- Destroy the heretic geth in "A House Divided" in Mass Effect 2 (+2 points)
- Broker peace between Legion and Tali in Mass Effect 2 (+1 point)

If you have fulfilled the plot elements required and have at least 5 points, you can persuade the quarian fleet to stand down using Paragon persuasion. This is extremely difficult and requires four bars of Reputation.

- Also note that siding with the geth over the quarians will have an impact on your relationship with Tali.



Act 2

Act 2 – Priority: Thessia

The asari, growing desperate as the Reapers attack their systems, have revealed an artifact that may hold the key to finding the Catalyst. Meet a scientific team at a temple on Thessia and investigate the artifact for clues.

MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: Thessia is a beautiful planet with gorgeous architecture. Unfortunately, by the time you arrive, it has become a war-torn shadow of its former self. You will engage in battle across broken bridges, demolished courtyards, and even inside sacred asari temples.

The bridge battle can be approached many ways, but since it's a direct assault against your enemy and the bridge doesn't provide any alternate paths, a head-on battle is your best bet at victory. Players with sniper skills many appreciate the straight-and-narrow approach, while most other players can engage the Reapers in standard warfare tactics.

Mid-mission, you will come upon a large courtyard. The fallen pillars and other debris here create multiple avenues of approach. However, snipers can enjoy attacking across the plaza and pick off enemies before they approach. The most difficult encounter here will be against the first Banshee you face. These asari-Reaper hybrids are large, fast, and capable of dealing lots of damage with only a few attacks.

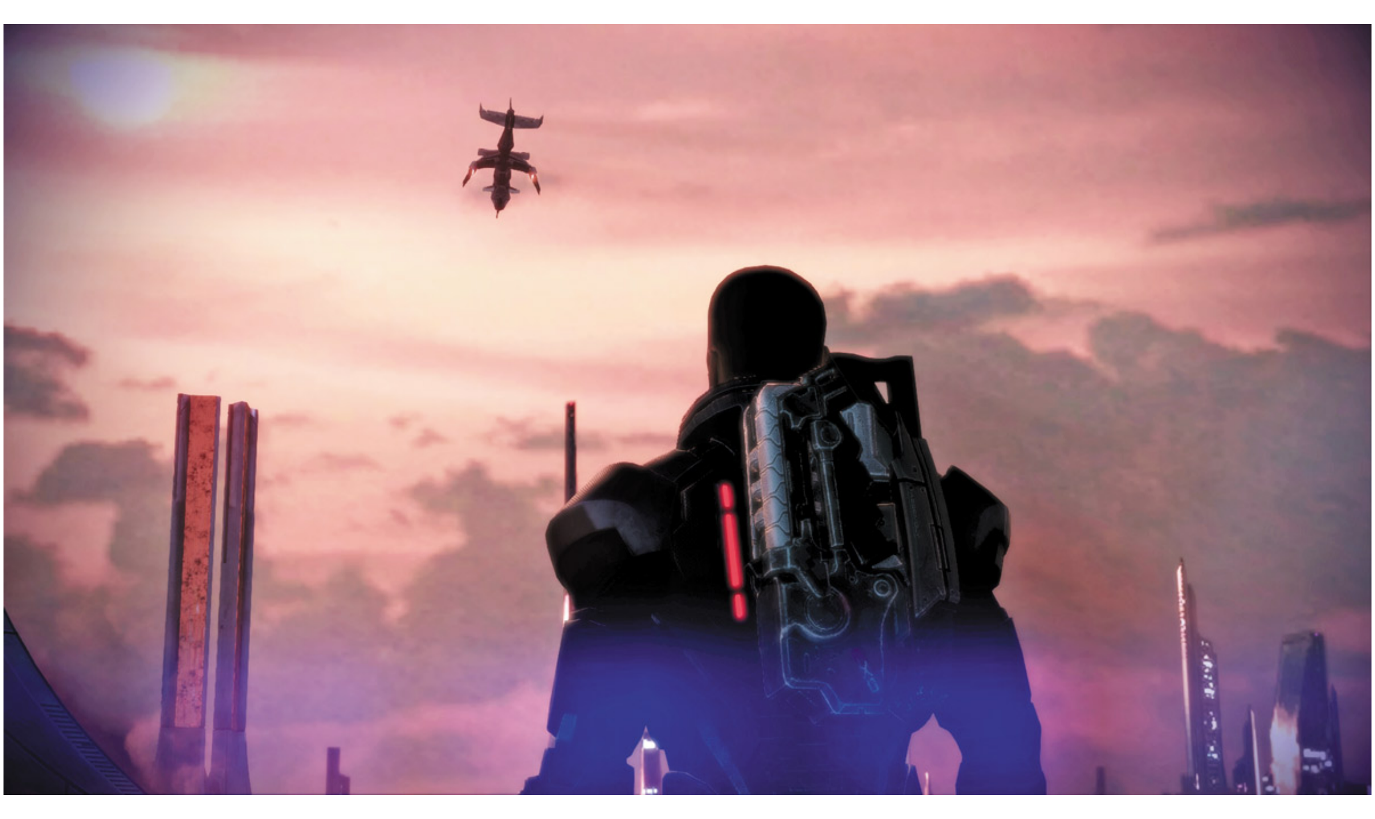
The final battle will take place inside an asari temple against an enemy you've yet to face in direct combat. Like the Banshee, he is fast and elusive. Use the temple's seats, pillars, and displays for cover, but sprint down the many lanes in the temple when you need to create some distance between you and your foe.

Consequence Overview: This mission is loaded with weighty conversations. Nearly every conversation from the initial dialogue with the asari Councilor and Liara while you're en route to the mission to the final debate with your archnemesis will carry Paragon/Renegade implications.

When you encounter a lone asari survivor near gunships, keep your Paragon/Renegade leaning in mind. You'll have the opportunity to gain more points there as well. Finally, nearly all dialogue choices made inside the asari temple will carry Paragon/Renegade choices as well.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Assault Rifle Extended Barrel	Sniper Rifle Concentration Module
M-98 Widow	Supplies
Med Kit (x4)	Titan Missile Launcher
Shotgun High-Caliber Barrel Mod	Umbra Visor
SMG Heat Sink	



AROUND THE GALAXY

Mission Unlocks

None

Mission Locks

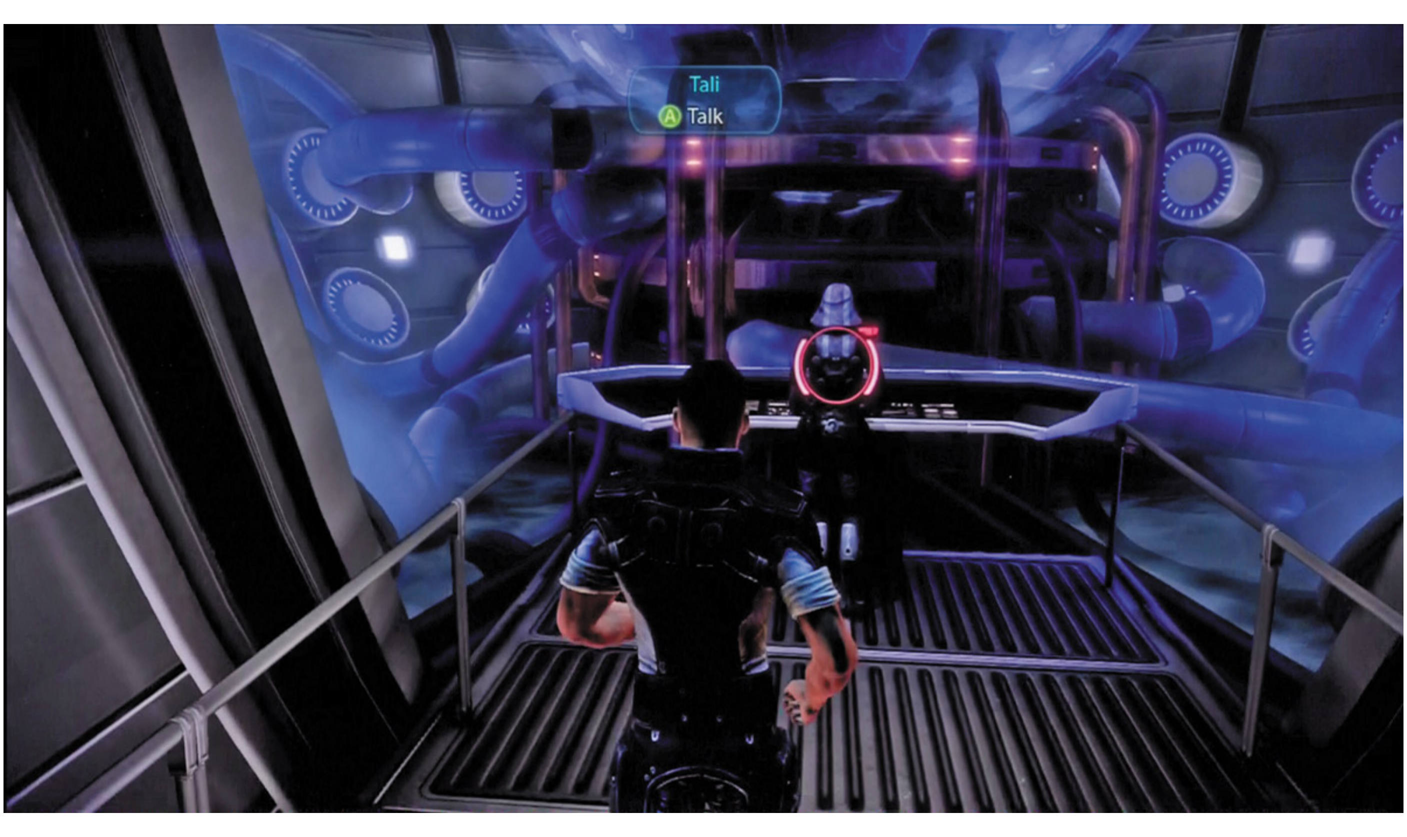
Tuchanka: Turian Platoon

WAR PREPARATIONS

You've freed the geth from the Reapers and eased tensions for the quarians. Depending on your final choice during the previous mission, you've either added one or both of the two fleets to the Galaxy at War. Even with all the progress you've made, the fight is still ahead of you, and you have yet to complete the key component to winning the war. The Crucible is missing the mysterious "catalyst," and the asari Councilor on the Citadel might have an idea as to what it might be...or where it may be located.

If you'd like to get straight to the next mission, skip to the "Priority: The Citadel" section later in this guide.

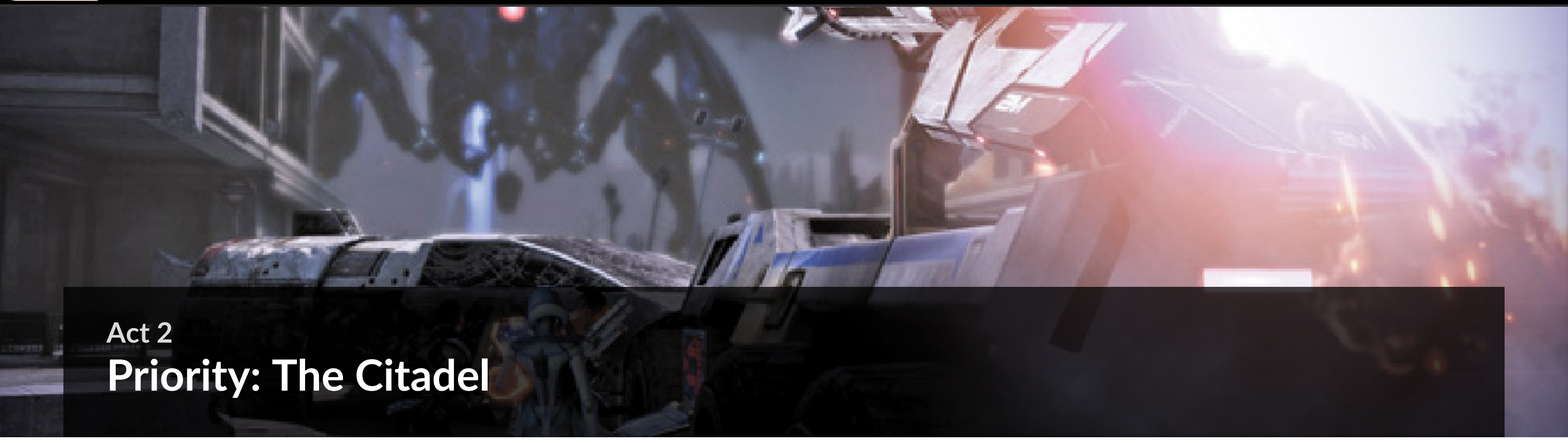
Speak to Tali



If you sided with Tali or brokered a peace between the geth and the quarians, you can speak to Tali aboard the Normandy. She's down in the engineer deck with Adams, so go down and have a chat with her. You'll gain Reputation points for the chat.

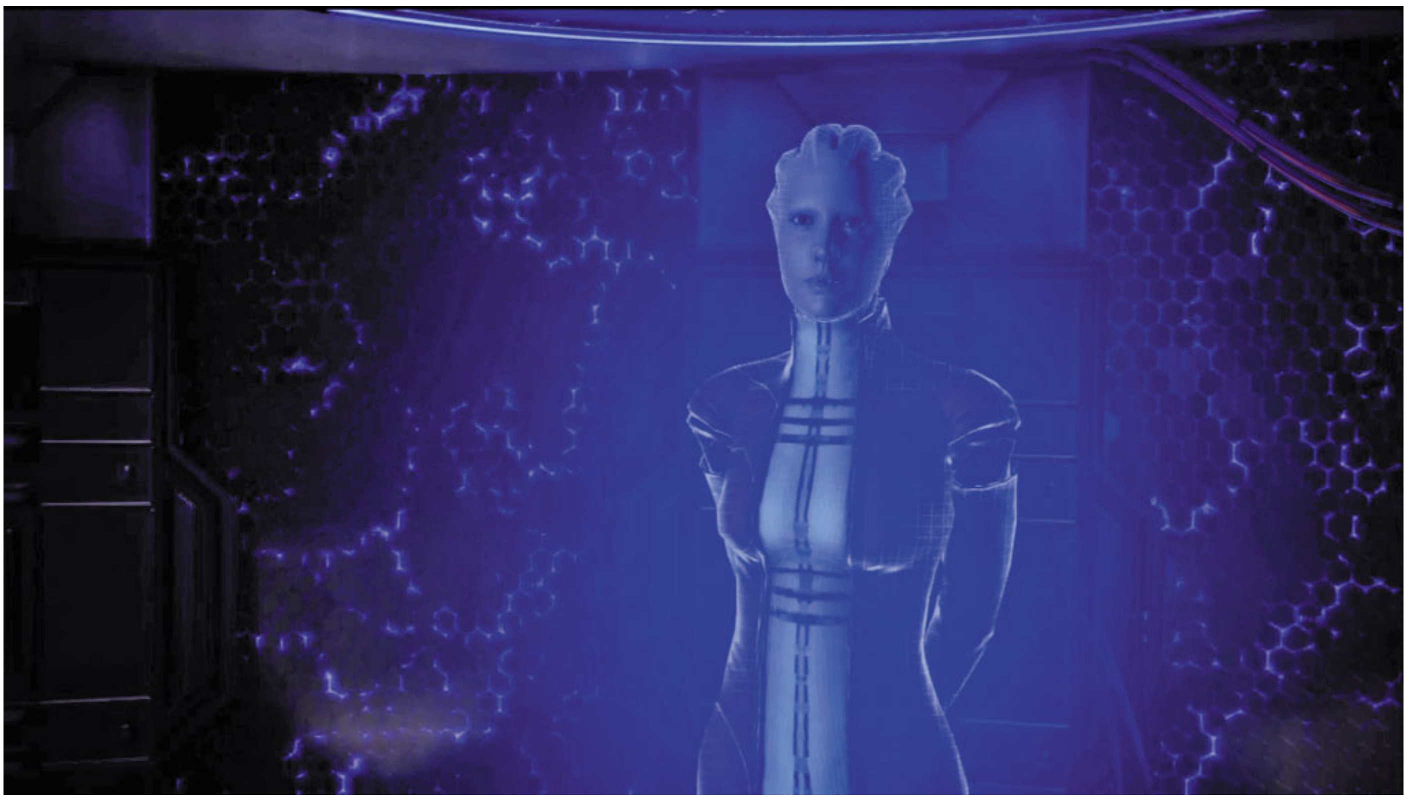
Give Diana Allers the Scoop

The quarian invasion of the Perseus Veil may be in the past, but it's still new and noteworthy to the rest of the Alliance planets. Diana Allers is ready for another interview, so go to your quarters and call her up to give her the scoop. This interview is short, but at least you'll get the chance to score some Paragon/Renegade points.



Act 2

Priority: The Citadel



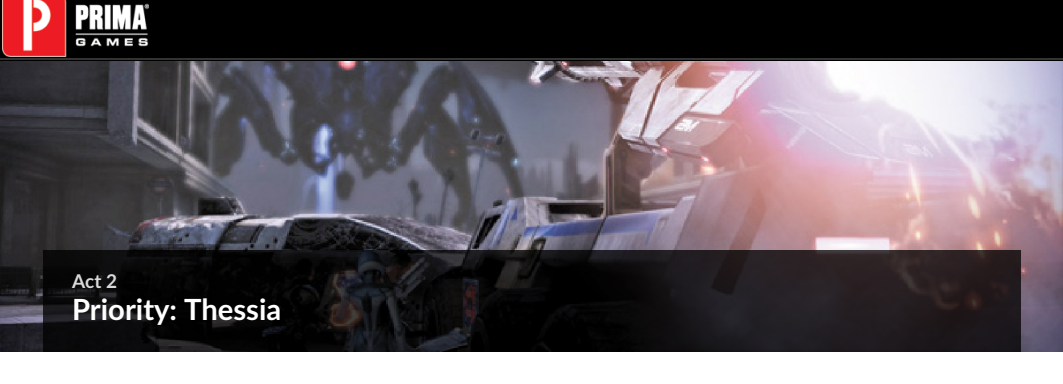
Upon returning to the Normandy after the previous mission, you receive a private communiqué from an asari representative on the Citadel. She requests your presence at the Citadel, so go there first to pick up your next mission.

NOTE

Even though the actual mission you'll be embarking on is "Priority: Thessia," you must first go to the Citadel to acquire it. This short segment is called "Priority: The Citadel."

Go to Councilor Udina's old office and speak with the asari Councilor. She reveals the location of a secret artifact that may help reveal the answer to the Catalyst question. As you might expect, the asari Councilor is careful to reveal the specifics about the artifact.

If you press her, however, you can get more information. Reply in accordance with your Paragon/Renegade leaning. If you want Paragon points, be agreeable. If you're a Renegade, confront her.



Act 2

Priority: Thessia

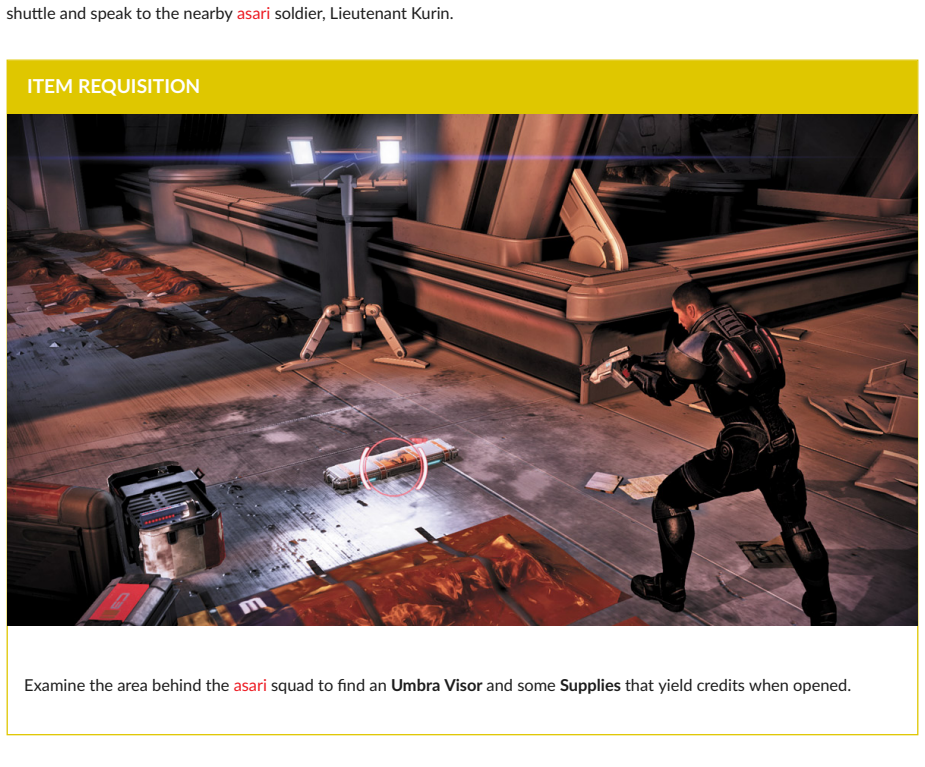
En route to the Thessian temple, Liara, who must be a part of your squad for this mission, reveals that she's been there before with her mother. More importantly, she's preoccupied with the people dying on her planet.

Ask her about her mother and get more information about the temple, its government funding, and the shady history behind it all.

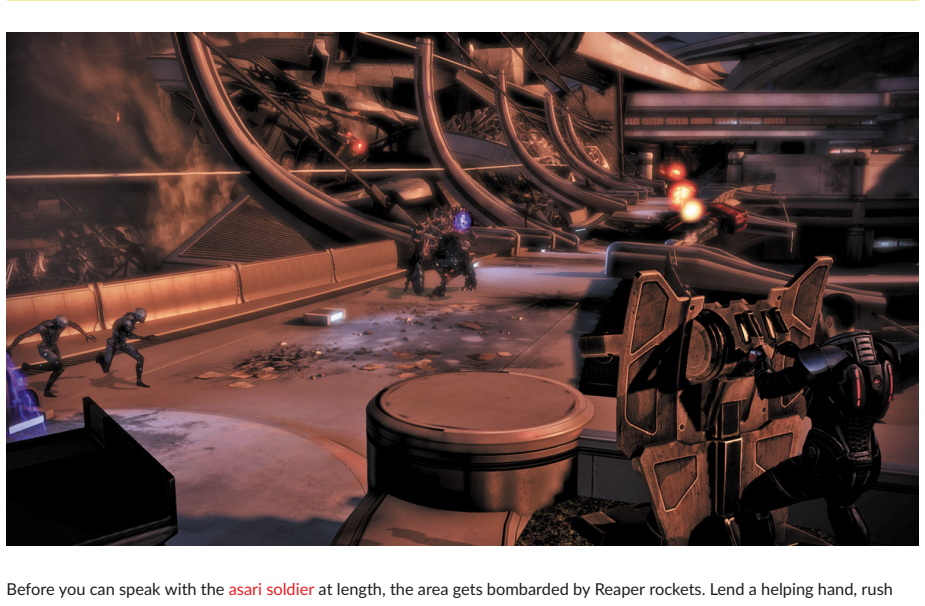
Since this conversation yields Paragon/Renegade points, press the conversation in accordance with your leaning. Reassure her that you'll save her people to gain Paragon points or tell her to block out that train of thought for Renegade points.

As you touch down on the planet, you see the battle against the Reapers raging across the Thessian surface. Disembark the shuttle and speak to the nearby asari soldier, Lieutenant Kurin.

ITEM REQUISITION



Examine the area behind the asari squad to find an **Umbra Visor** and some **Supplies** that yield credits when opened.



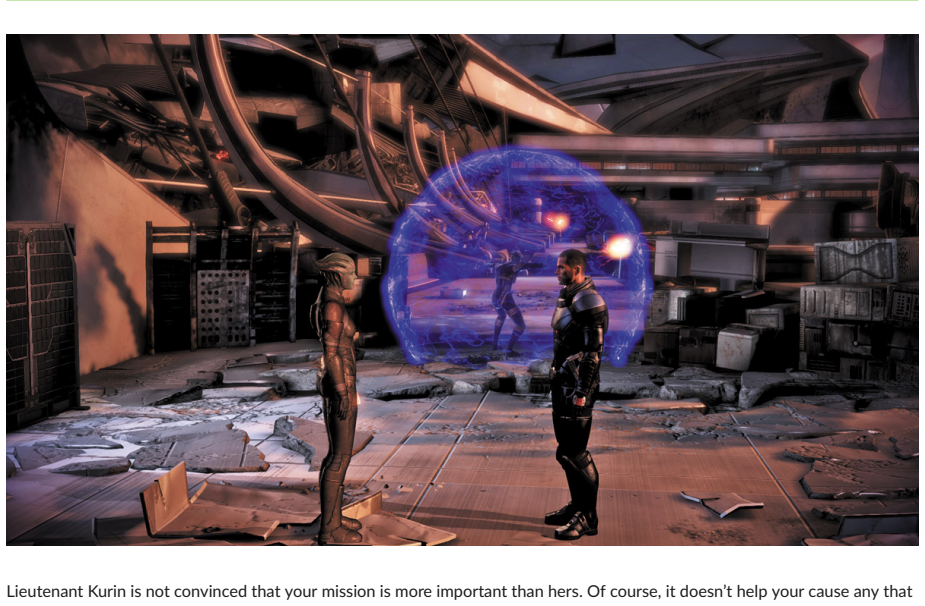
Before you can speak with the asari soldier at length, the area gets bombarded by Reaper rockets. Lend a helping hand, rush over to the unmanned turret, and activate it. Take aim down the length of the bridge ahead of you and open fire on the Brute before it can attack the asari camp.

Keep a steady stream of fire on the bridge as more Brutes and several Husks rush the asari soldier holding the barrier. Eliminate a Brute, then quickly swing the turret left to spot any Husks near the barrier. Eliminate the Husks, then swing the turret back to the right to intercept new Brutes.

Continue swinging the turret left and right, eliminating Reapers as you go until the coast is all clear. Get off the turret and return to Lieutenant Kurin.

TIP

Keep an eye on the Barrier Strength meter in the screen's top right corner. If it is being depleted, it means that it is currently under attack.

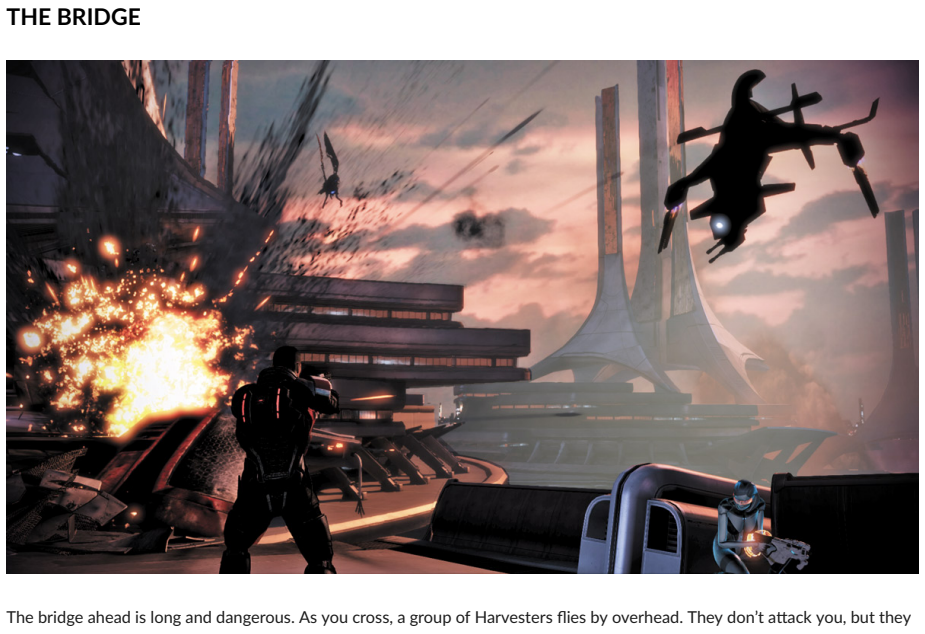


Lieutenant Kurin is not convinced that your mission is more important than hers. Of course, it doesn't help your cause any that she wasn't given any information about your mission, so she can't weigh the importance of the two and make a decision.

This is your chance to either cooperate and persuade her, or force the issue.

Your responses to Lieutenant Kurin during this conversation will also yield Paragon/Renegade points. If you divulge information about your mission, you'll gain Paragon points. Keep her in the dark and you'll accrue Renegade points. She'll let you proceed either way.

THE BRIDGE



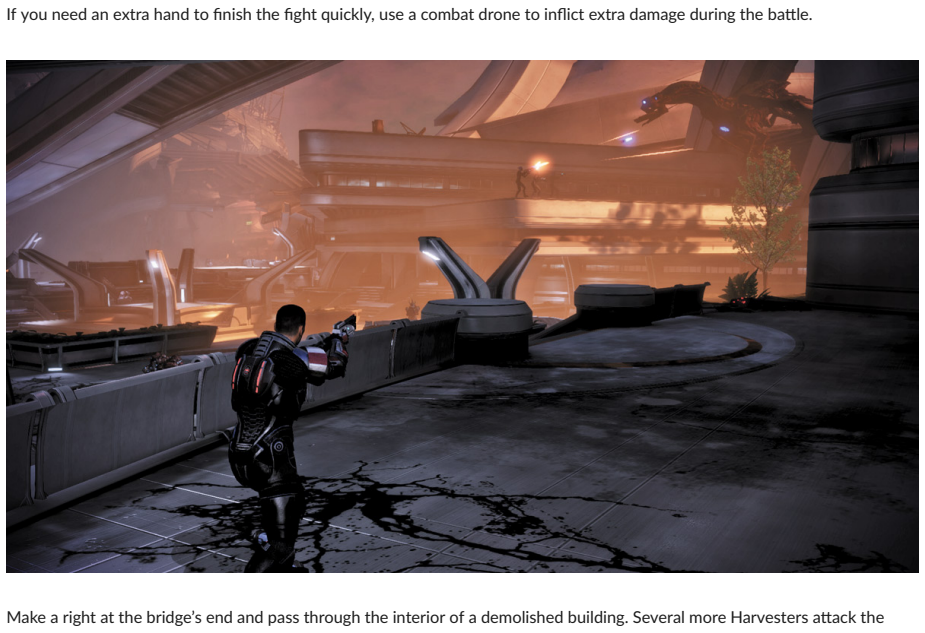
The bridge ahead is long and dangerous. As you cross, a group of Harvesters flies by overhead. They don't attack you, but they do release several Cannibals and Marauders. The Reapers wait on the far end to tear you to shreds, but there is only one way to go—forward.

Stop behind one of the supports on the side and duck for cover. Aim down the length of the bridge and open fire on the Cannibals at the far end. Pick them off from your covered position.

They don't advance down the bridge in your direction, so you can either keep your distance and snipe them, or get in closer for a better line of sight.

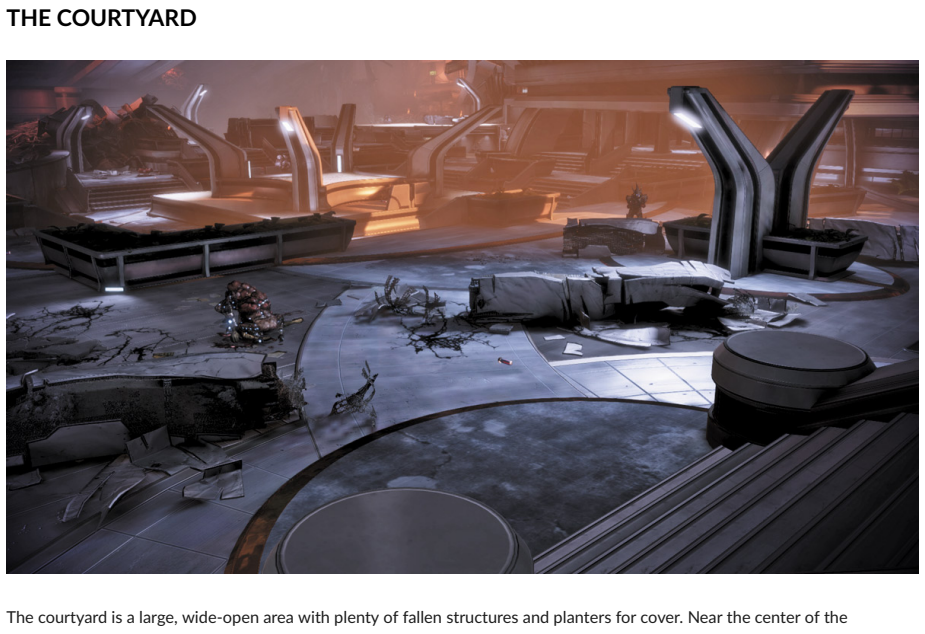
Since the bridge is straight and doesn't have any extra levels or side passages, the battle here can be very straightforward. Use a preferred combination of powers and weapons fire and the Cannibals and Marauders go down easy.

If you need an extra hand to finish the fight quickly, use a combat drone to inflict extra damage during the battle.



Make a right at the bridge's end and pass through the interior of a demolished building. Several more Harvesters attack the asari soldiers ahead of you, but there's nothing you can do. Keep going until you reach a ledge overlooking a courtyard below.

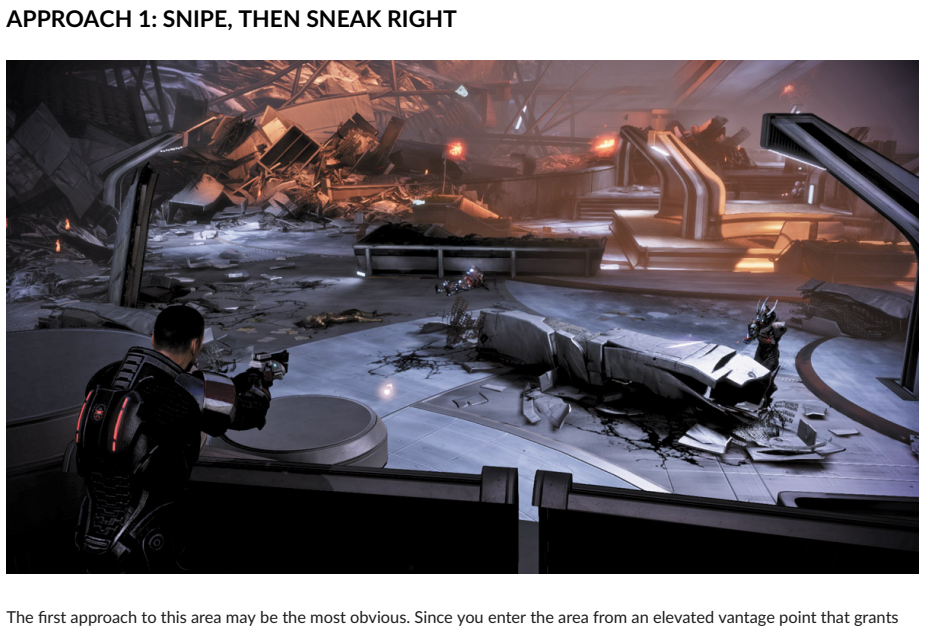
THE COURTYARD



The courtyard is a large, wide-open area with plenty of fallen structures and planters for cover. Near the center of the courtyard is a decorative structure that breaks the courtyard into two halves.

The left side of the courtyard is full of tall debris and stops near the center structure. The right side of the courtyard leads to the entrance of a building that provides plenty of great cover and leads all the way to the opposite end.

APPROACH 1: SNIPE, THEN SNEAK RIGHT

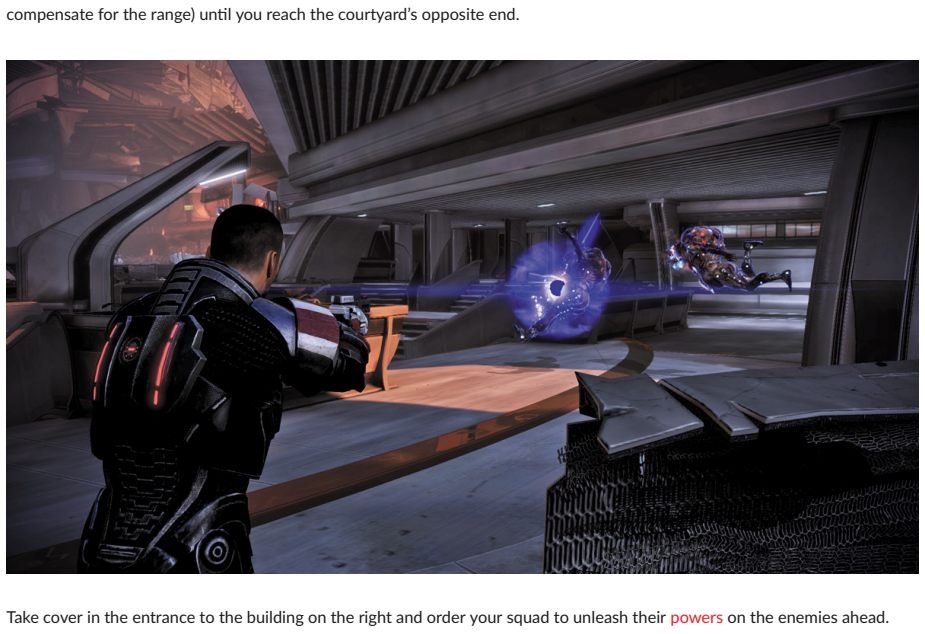


The first approach to this area may be the most obvious. Since you enter the area from an elevated vantage point that grants you a view of the entire area below, take out a sniper rifle and get to work.

Use your team's powers to distract the enemies below, or even use your crew as bait and begin picking off foes with well-placed headshots.

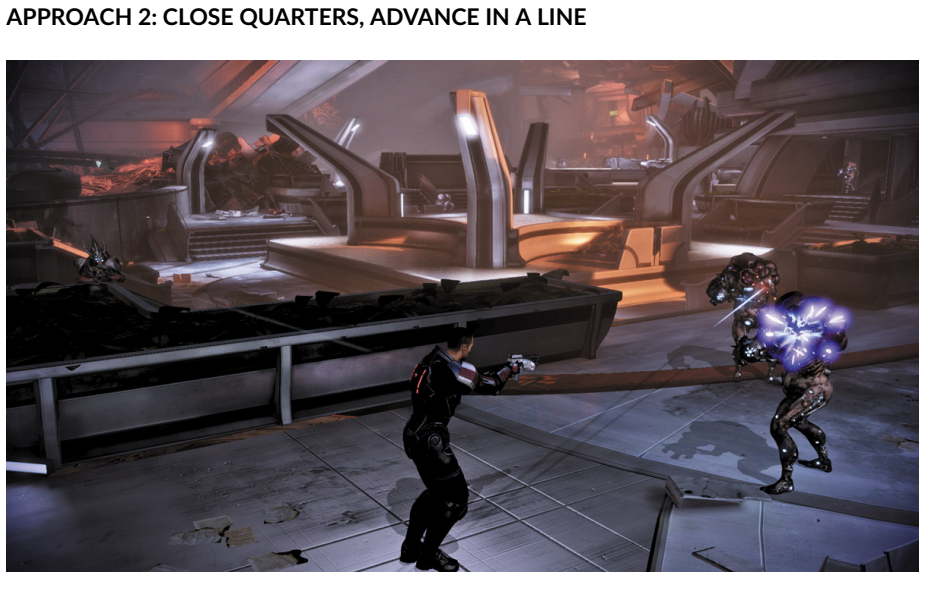
Use powers that can disable, stun, or otherwise slow down enemies in order to get as many headshots as possible. After taking out all of the enemies near the courtyard entrance, venture down the steps and slowly creep right, toward the far building.

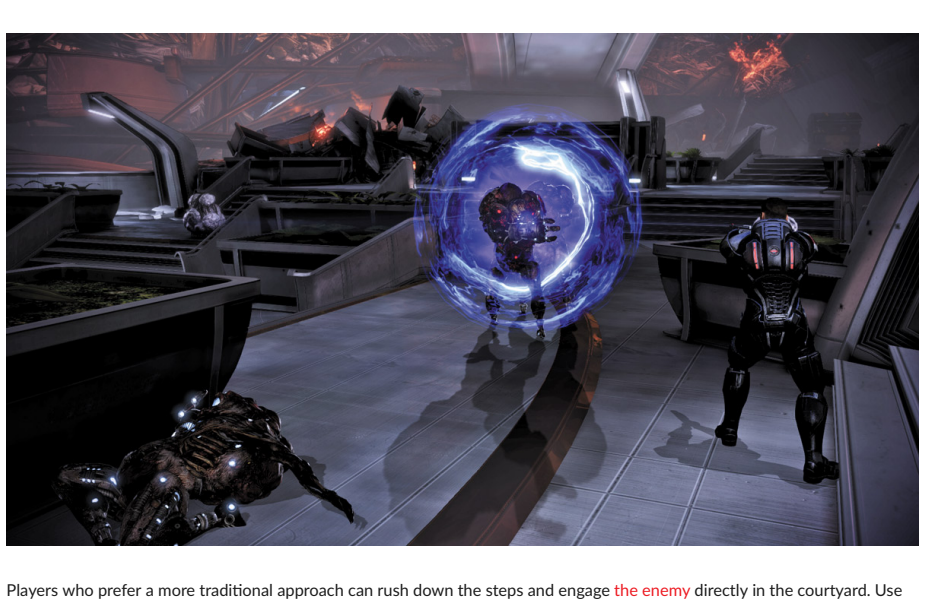
Pick off more enemies as you go, using power combos and weapons fire (you could switch to an assault rifle now to compensate for the range) until you reach the courtyard's opposite end.



Take cover in the entrance to the building on the right and order your squad to unleash their powers on the enemies ahead. Use drones and Singularity. Liara's Warp also helps dish out damage. Eliminate all foes until only the Banshee remains.

APPROACH 2: CLOSE QUARTERS, ADVANCE IN A LINE

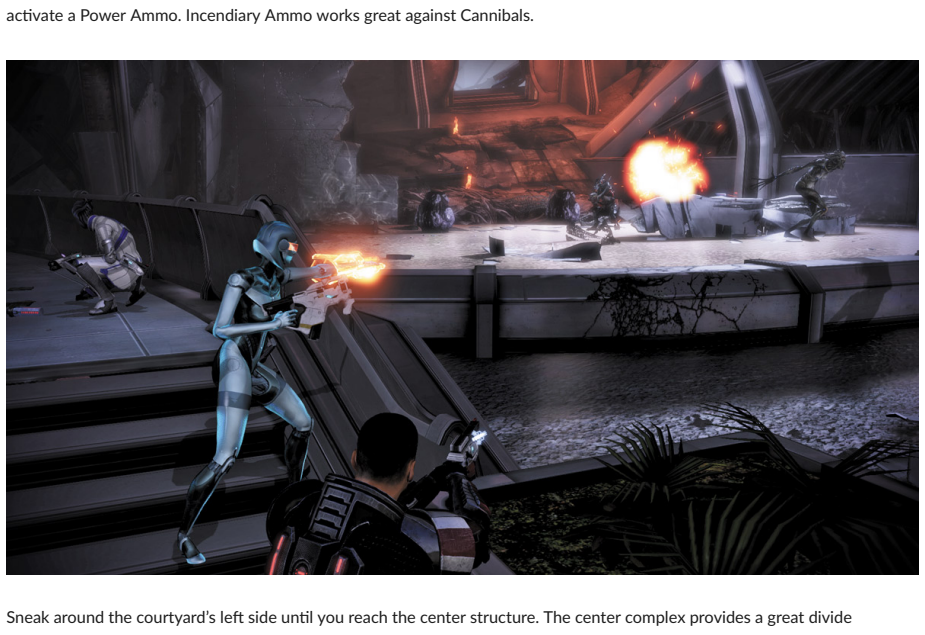




Players who prefer a more traditional approach can rush down the steps and engage the enemy directly in the courtyard. Use powers like Adrenaline or Tactical Cloak to sneak down the steps and blast the Cannibals near the base of the steps.

With Adrenaline, you can attack multiple enemies before it wears off. If you are using Tactical Cloak, attack the strongest enemy first, then turn to the rest of the Reapers nearby.

Order your squad to take cover near you, in the courtyard, and begin combining powers to destroy the rest of the Cannibals. Use power combos like Liara's Singularity and Warp, or use Cryo Blast. If you've got a good close-range weapon, equip it and activate a Power Ammo. Incendiary Ammo works great against Cannibals.

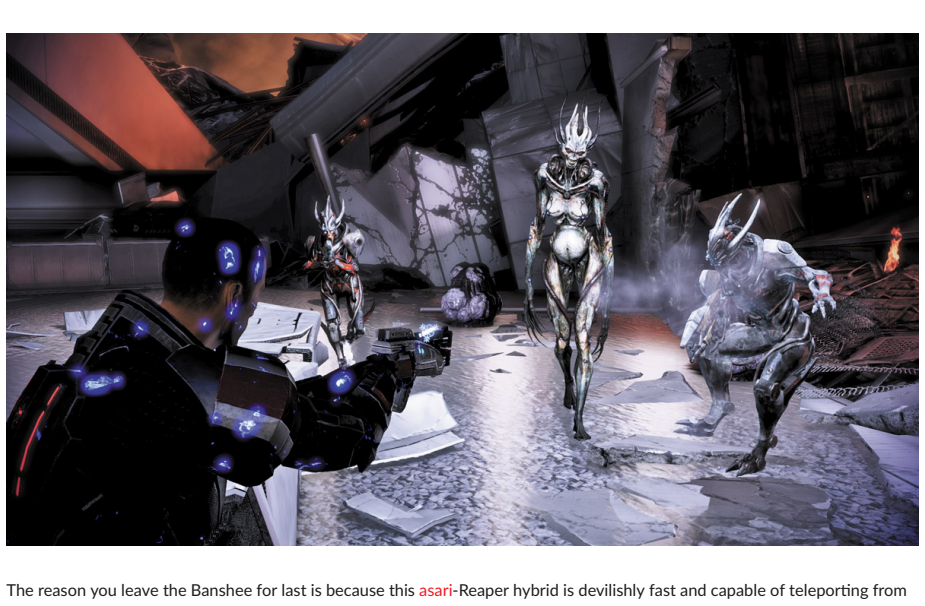


Sneak around the courtyard's left side until you reach the center structure. The center complex provides a great divide between the front of the courtyard and the far side so you can approach the enemies on the far side using plenty of cover.

Lead with your powers, but keep the pressure on the other enemies as you approach. As you move in, also direct your squad to approach from the far right side. This way, you can move at the same time and advance the squad as a line of protective fire and power combos.

Continue moving forward, past the center structure, until you reach the far end. Concentrate on the Marauders, taking them out one by one, until only the Banshee is left.

BANSHEE BATTLE



The reason you leave the Banshee for last is because this asari-Reaper hybrid is devilishly fast and capable of teleporting from place to place in the blink of an eye. One second she can be next to you, and the next she'll be across the courtyard attacking a teammate.

Spread out your squad so her attention is divided, then order your teammates to unleash all of their most destructive powers on the creature. You may have to chase the Banshee as she rushes from squad member to squad member, but you'll avoid the squad taking one of her devastating blasts all at once.

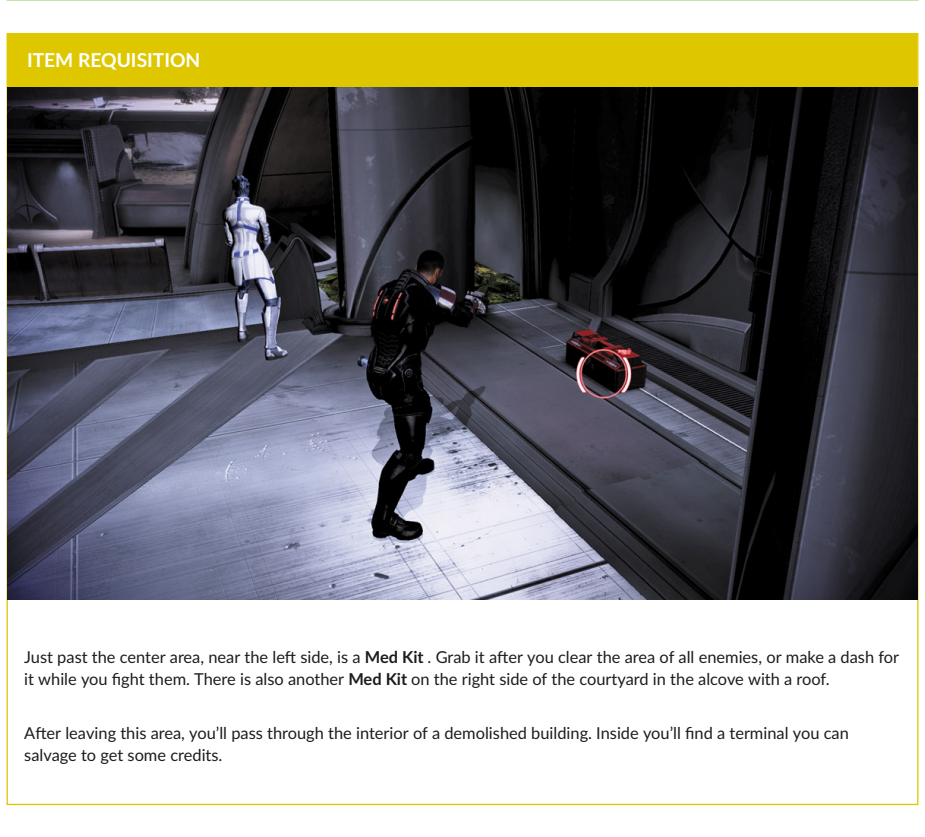
As your squad members lure the Banshee around the courtyard, follow the asari abomination and hit her with power combinations and heavy weapons fire until she falls.

TIP

Sniper-proficient players can keep their distance and attempt to pick her off, but the Banshee's ability to warp back and forth make it increasingly difficult to get headshots unless you're a Soldier and can use Adrenaline.

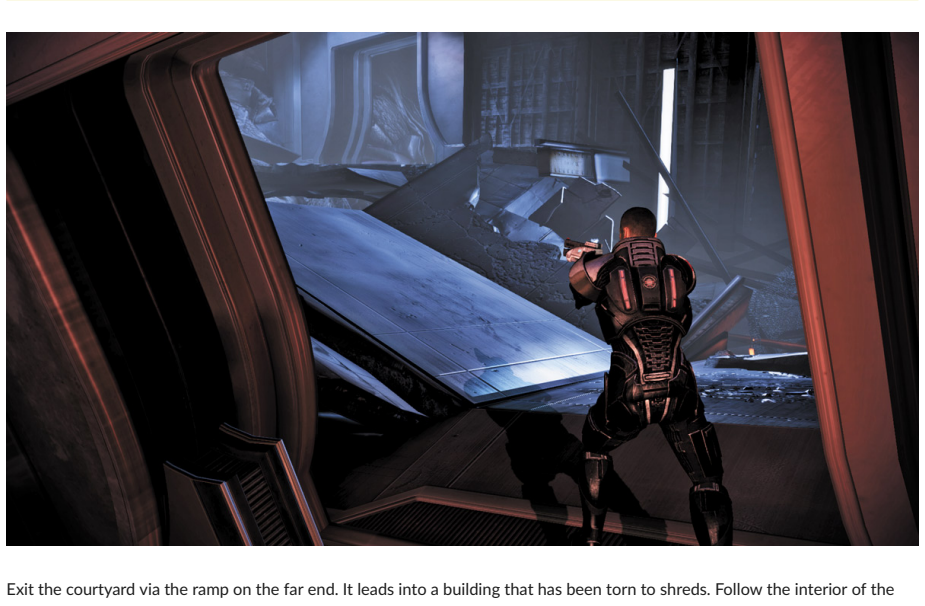
In the far back left corner of the courtyard on the second highest elevated level is a hidden Titan Missile Launcher, which is very useful against the Banshee.

ITEM REQUISITION



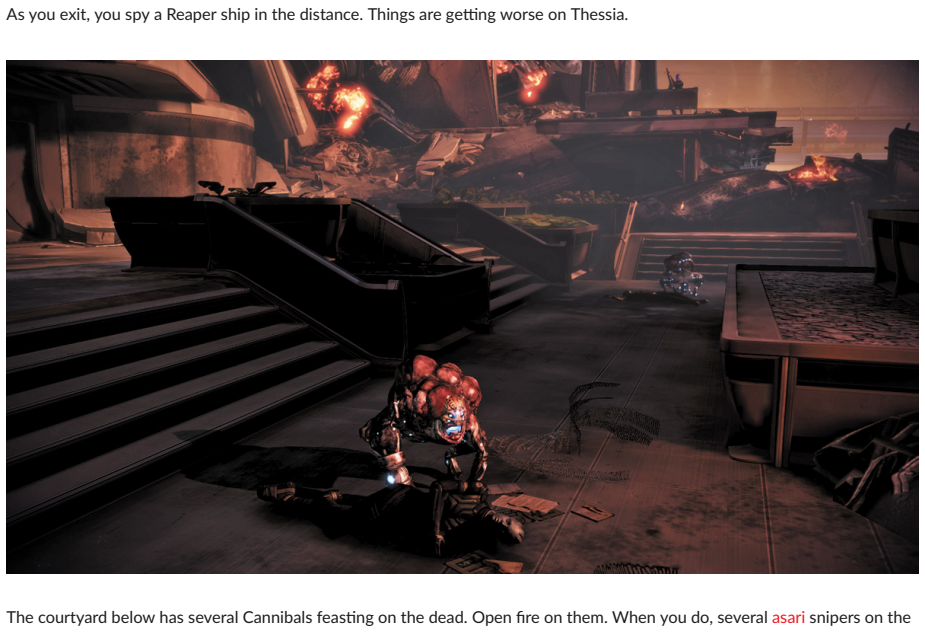
Just past the center area, near the left side, is a **Med Kit** . Grab it after you clear the area of all enemies, or make a dash for it while you fight them. There is also another **Med Kit** on the right side of the courtyard in the alcove with a roof.

After leaving this area, you'll pass through the interior of a demolished building. Inside you'll find a terminal you can salvage to get some credits.



Exit the courtyard via the ramp on the far end. It leads into a building that has been torn to shreds. Follow the interior of the building to a door and go through. You emerge on another balcony overlooking a courtyard below.

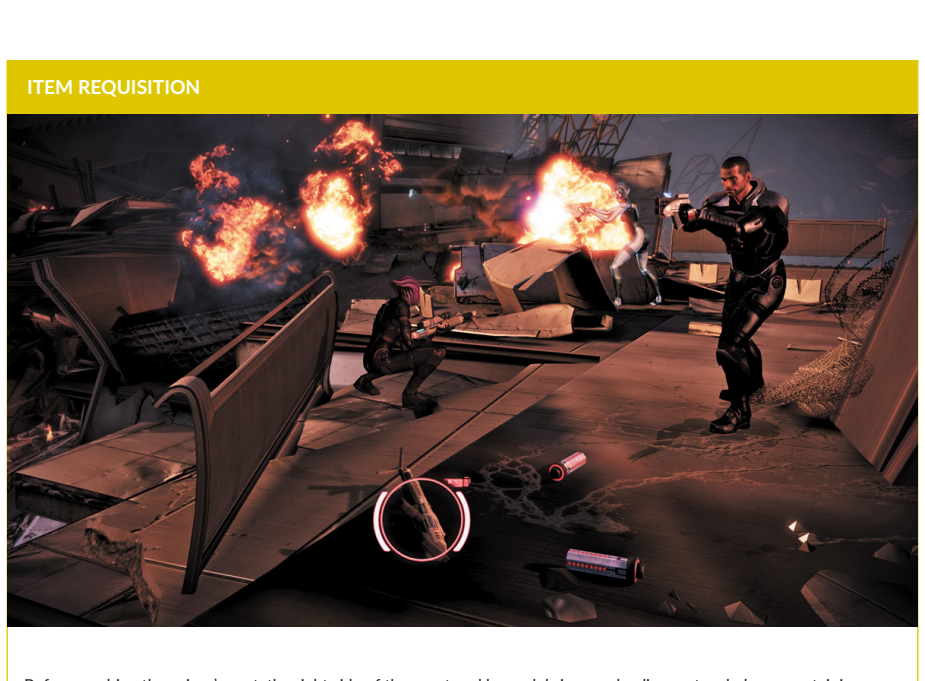
As you exit, you spy a Reaper ship in the distance. Things are getting worse on Thessia.



The courtyard below has several Cannibals feasting on the dead. Open fire on them. When you do, several asari snipers on the courtyard's opposite end also open fire on them. Go down to the courtyard and cross it to reach the snipers on the other side.

Before you can reach them, however, a rogue missile hits their location, destroying all but one of the asari snipers in one blow.

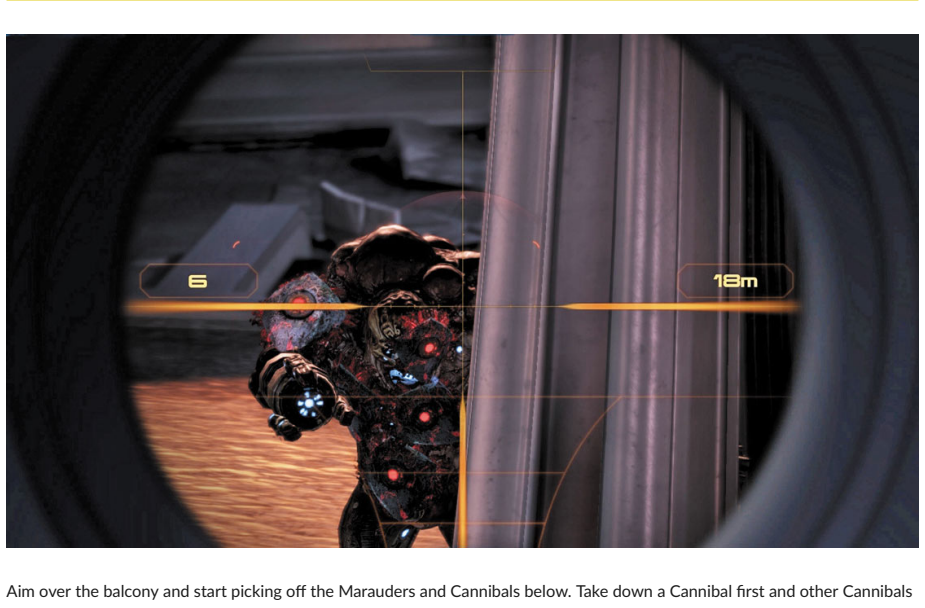
ITEM REQUISITION



Before reaching the sniper's nest, the right side of the courtyard has a debris ramp leading up to a balcony containing a **Med Kit** and a **Shotgun High-Caliber Barrel Mod** . The ground level underneath this balcony has a **Broken Shotgun** that can be salvaged for credits.

The sniper's perch has several great items to pick up. Grab the **M-98 Widow sniper rifle** and the **Sniper Rifle Concentration Module** to augment your arsenal. Also pick up the **Med Kit** nearby before proceeding.

The **M-98 Widow** is a great sniper rifle to equip immediately. If you've got another rifle that is already upgraded, then weigh their stats before equipping it. If your current sniper rifle is level I, then equip this one in its place.



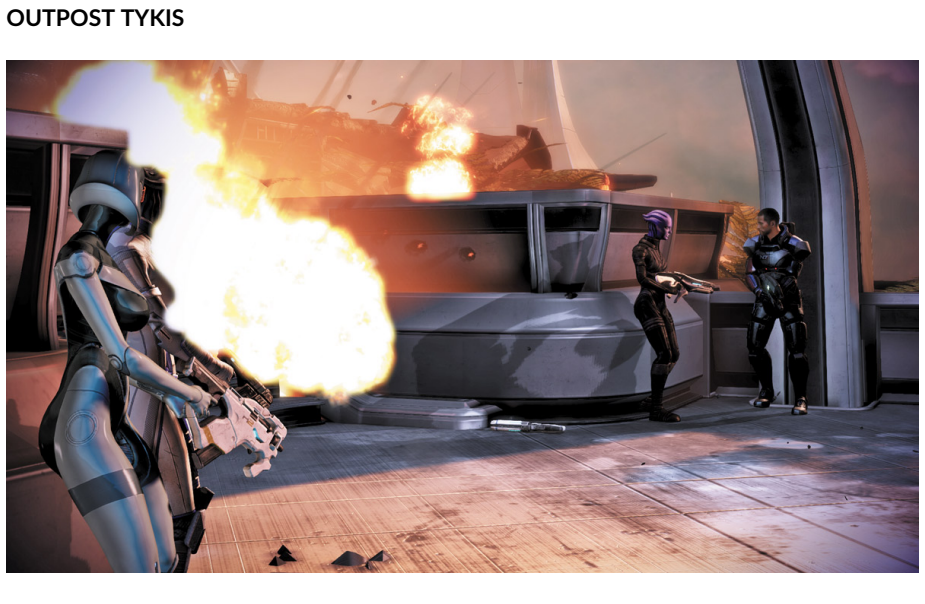
Aim over the balcony and start picking off the Marauders and Cannibals below. Take down a Cannibal first and other Cannibals will rush to it when it falls. As they do, they'll leave cover and expose themselves to weapons fire and power combinations.

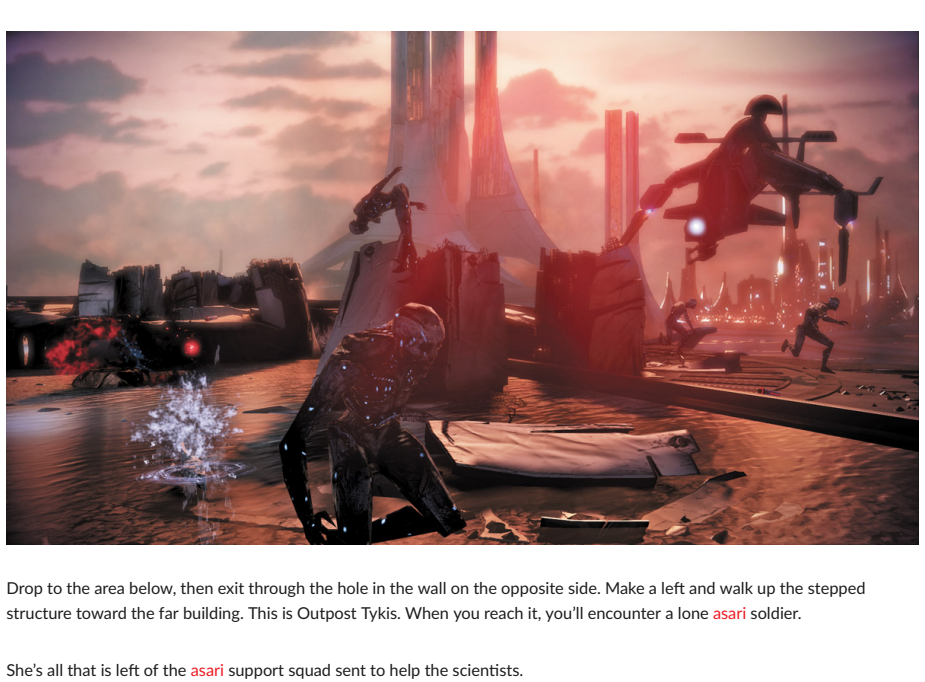
Take them down, then focus on eliminating the Marauders.

TIP

Look for the barrier engine along the back wall of the area below. Blow it up first. This barrier engine provides barrier protection to the Reapers that will refill over time if depleted. It is still possible to kill Reapers while the barrier engine is active; it's just harder.

OUTPOST TYKIS





Drop to the area below, then exit through the hole in the wall on the opposite side. Make a left and walk up the stepped structure toward the far building. This is Outpost Tykis. When you reach it, you'll encounter a lone asari soldier.

She's all that is left of the asari support squad sent to help the scientists.

Luckily, she can call in air support to help you reach the interior of Outpost Tykis. As the asari gunships zoom in, the Reapers entrench themselves farther ahead. Wait for the gunships to open fire on the Reapers below and begin thinning their numbers.

The asari soldier takes position ahead of you and lays cover fire as a large squad of Reapers comes marching down the stairs toward you. Between the asari soldier and the gunship, you've got a small window to make your approach to the asari temple ahead. Leave cover and sprint past the attacking Reapers.

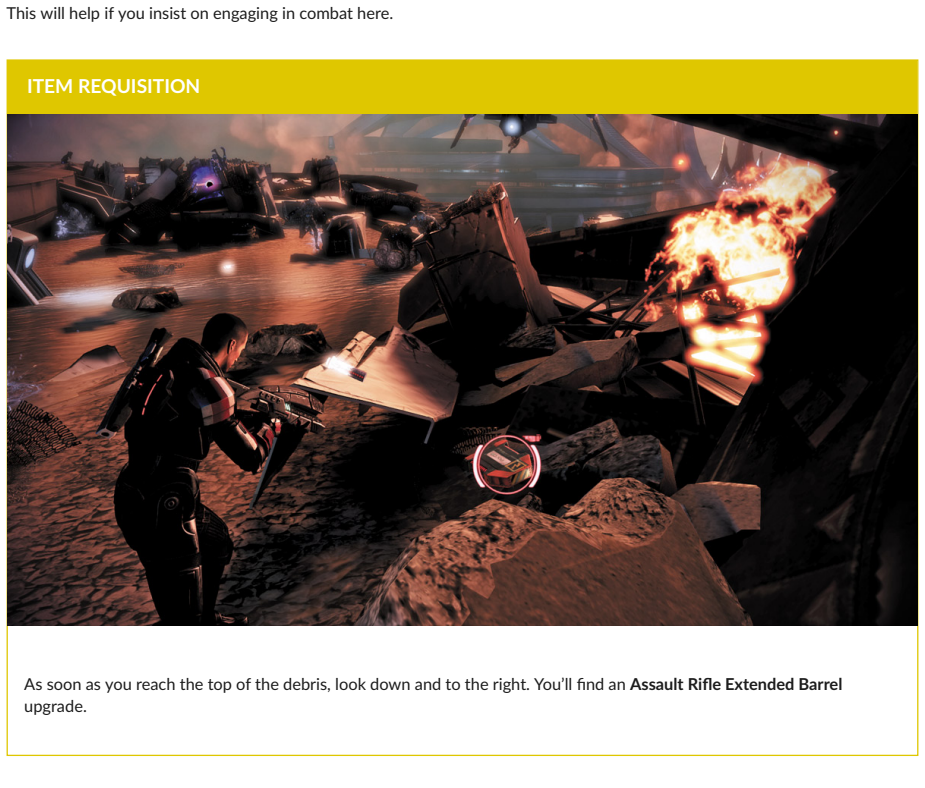
Shoot only to clear a path ahead of you, but don't engage them any more than you need to. They will quickly close around you and overwhelm you; instead, sprint up the debris pile and past them to the next checkpoint. Make a right when you reach the top of the debris.

TIP

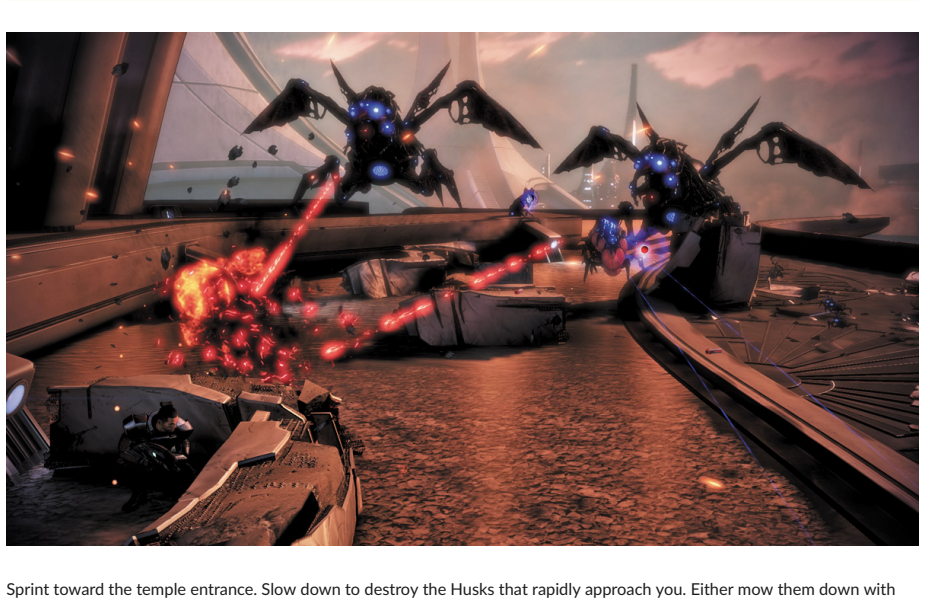
You can engage the Reapers during this encounter, but doing so will only cost you Medi-Gel packs and risk mission failure. Instead, take advantage of the asari support and rush past.

Alternatively, there is another Titan Missile Launcher on the ground right next to where you take cover at the start of the fight. This will help if you insist on engaging in combat here.

ITEM REQUISITION



As soon as you reach the top of the debris, look down and to the right. You'll find an **Assault Rifle Extended Barrel** upgrade.

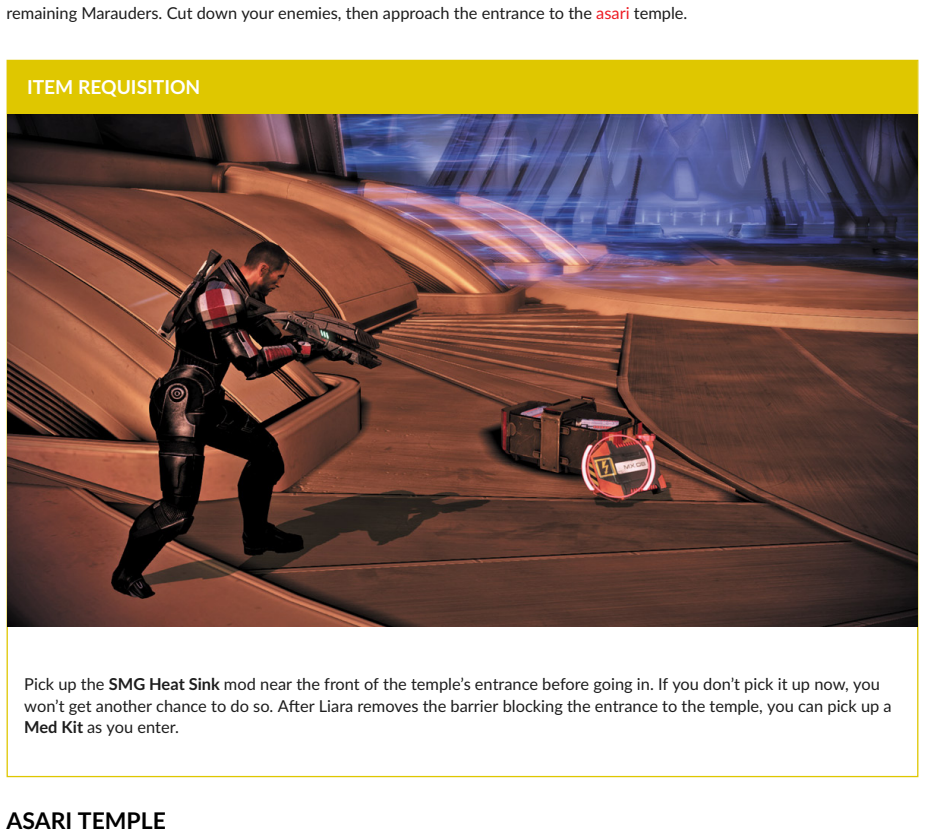


Sprint toward the temple entrance. Slow down to destroy the Husks that rapidly approach you. Either mow them down with heavy weapons fire or toss a grenade ahead of you to catch many at once. Pick off any that remain, or use power combos to slow them down and immediately obliterate them.

Once the Husks are down, several Ravagers and Harvesters attack from afar. You can't win this encounter, so order your entire squad to take cover. Stay behind cover as much as possible, and only leave it to eliminate an enemy that gets too close for comfort.

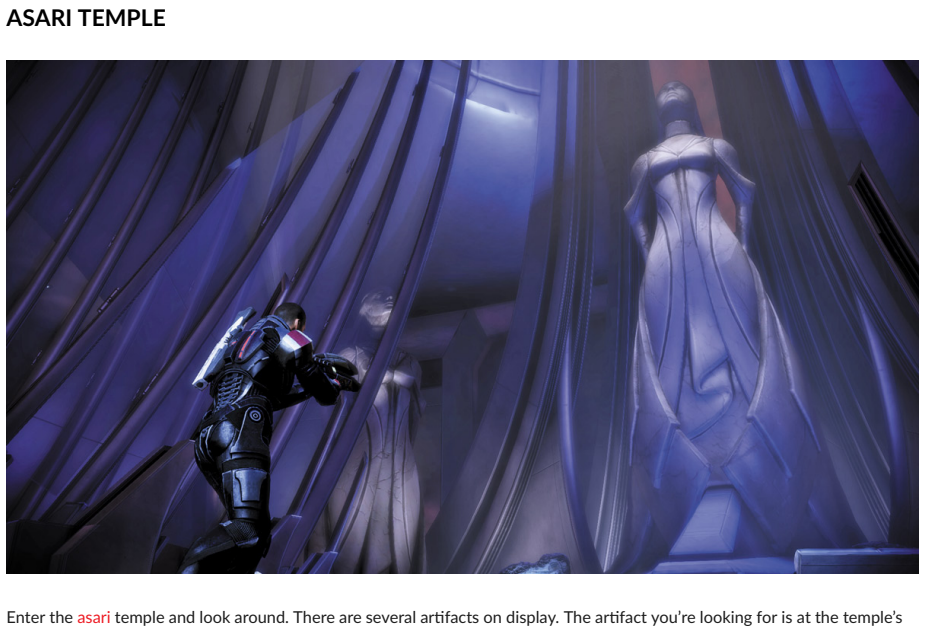
Otherwise, wait for the gunship to draw away the Harvesters, then leave your position to eliminate the Ravagers and remaining Marauders. Cut down your enemies, then approach the entrance to the asari temple.

ITEM REQUISITION

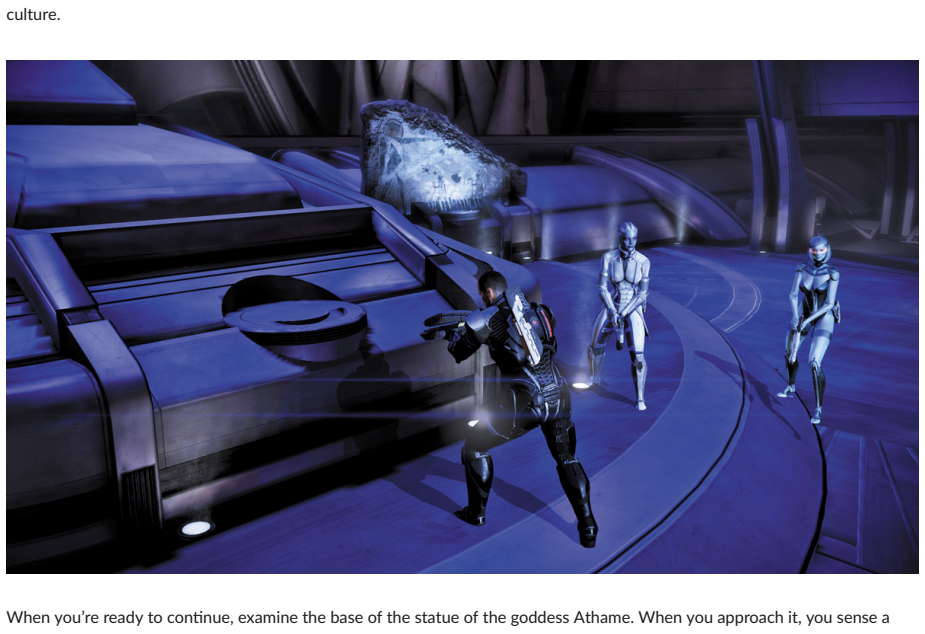


Pick up the **SMG Heat Sink** mod near the front of the temple's entrance before going in. If you don't pick it up now, you won't get another chance to do so. After Liara removes the barrier blocking the entrance to the temple, you can pick up a **Med Kit** as you enter.

ASARI TEMPLE



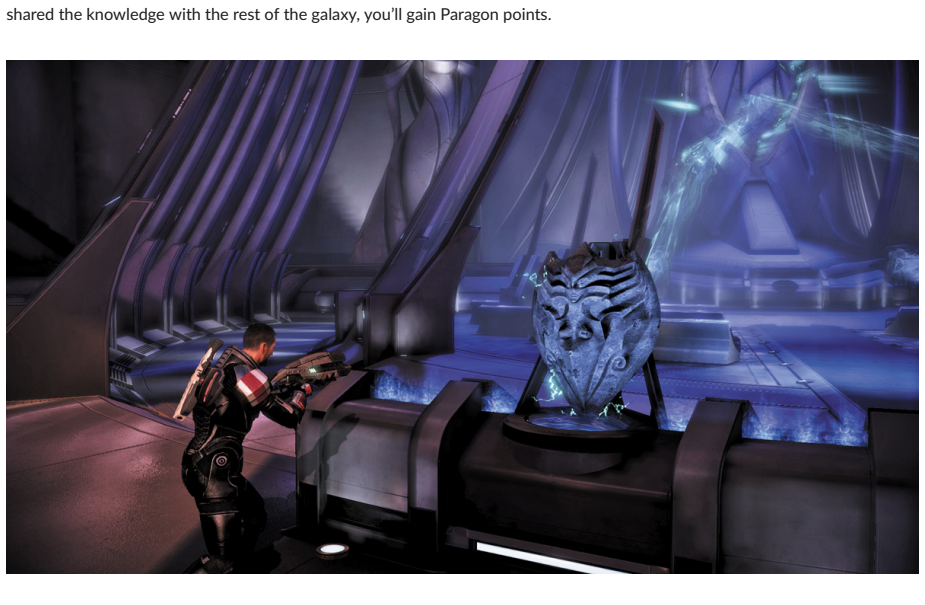
Enter the asari temple and look around. There are several artifacts on display. The artifact you're looking for is at the temple's far end, at the base of the large statue. However, take this time to examine all of them and learn a little bit about the asari culture.

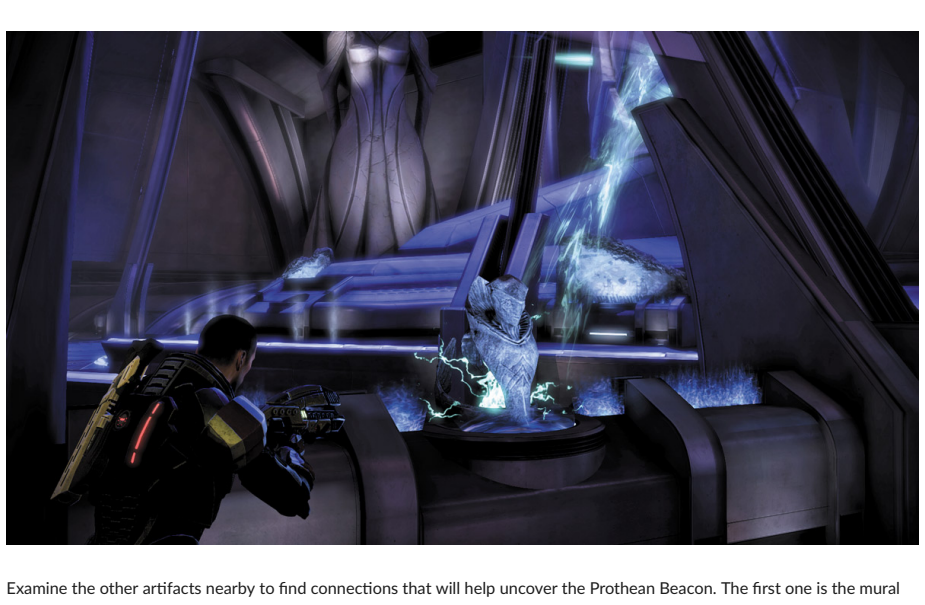


When you're ready to continue, examine the base of the statue of the goddess Athame. When you approach it, you sense a Prothean Beacon inside the statue. Liara, in disbelief, briefly doubts your claim.

During this conversation, you can hypothesize why the asari have become so advanced a species, and either agree or disagree with the asari's decision to keep this beacon hidden.

If you agree with their decision to not share knowledge, you'll gain Renegade points. If you insist that the asari should've shared the knowledge with the rest of the galaxy, you'll gain Paragon points.





Examine the other artifacts nearby to find connections that will help uncover the Prothean Beacon. The first one is the mural to the statue's right. The other artifacts are a manuscript on the far left corner, the bust along the temple's right edge, and the shield near the temple entrance.

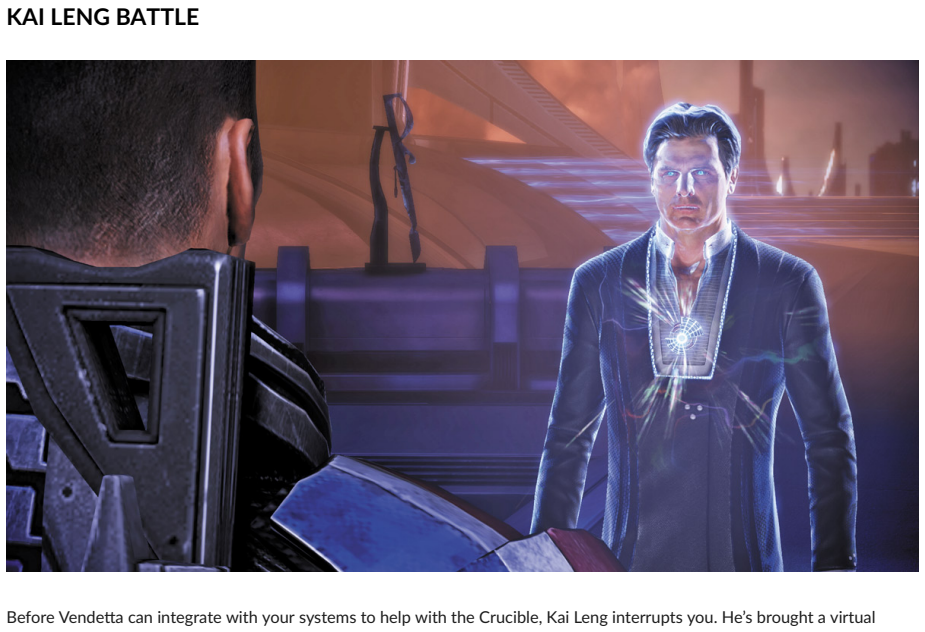
After activating all of the necessary artifacts, you can access the Prothean Beacon. Return to the statue and activate it to release an ancient Prothean VI.

The Prothean VI, Vendetta, explains that it may be too late to complete the Crucible. The ensuing conversation can also yield Paragon/Renegade points. Either ask for the VI's help for Paragon points, or demand its cooperation for Renegade points.

TIP

While speaking to Vendetta, select "The Crucible" conversation option. The ancient VI will tell you more about the device and something potentially shocking about the Reapers and the nature of the galaxy, its patterns, and its cycles.

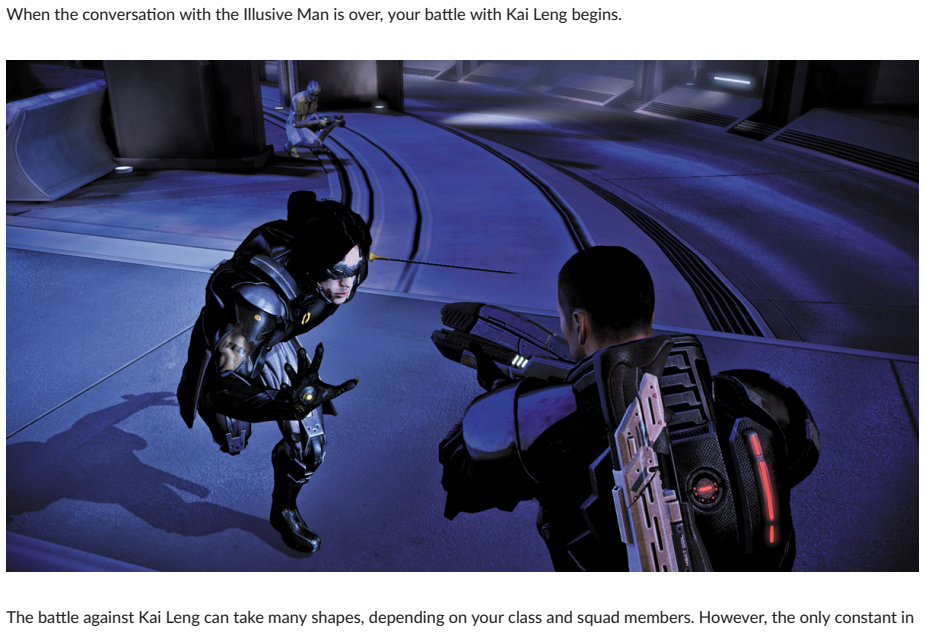
KAI LENG BATTLE



Before Vendetta can integrate with your systems to help with the Crucible, Kai Leng interrupts you. He's brought a virtual construct of the Illusive Man with him. Speak to the Illusive Man and listen to his plans.

Rather than destroying the Reapers, he wants to control them. Choose the "Whose side are you on?" conversation option to get a Paragon/Renegade persuasion option.

When the conversation with the Illusive Man is over, your battle with Kai Leng begins.



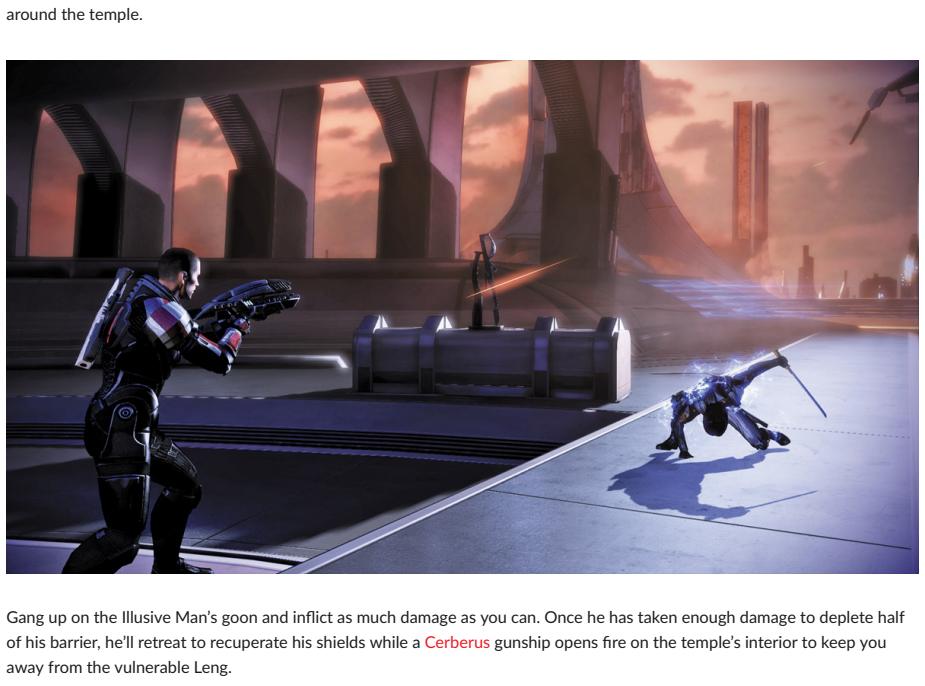
The battle against Kai Leng can take many shapes, depending on your class and squad members. However, the only constant in this battle is Kai Leng. He's quick, he's capable of one-hit kills, and he frequently needs to recharge his shields after taking damage.

As soon as the battle against the assassin begins, switch to a weapon that is good at close to medium range. Snipers can inflict big damage, but like the Banshees, Kai Leng can shift from place to place quickly, making him a sniper's worst nightmare.

Rely on heavy weapons fire to inflict major damage while using powers to supplement your damage-dealing or to slow him down a bit. Powers like Concussive Shot, Shockwave, and Throw can help keep Leng at bay for a bit, but only long enough to follow up with weapons fire.

If the assassin runs toward you, sprint away to create some distance, then turn around and attack again. Adept players can combine powers like Warp and Singularity, or even use Cluster Grenade to throw Kai Leng off his game as well.

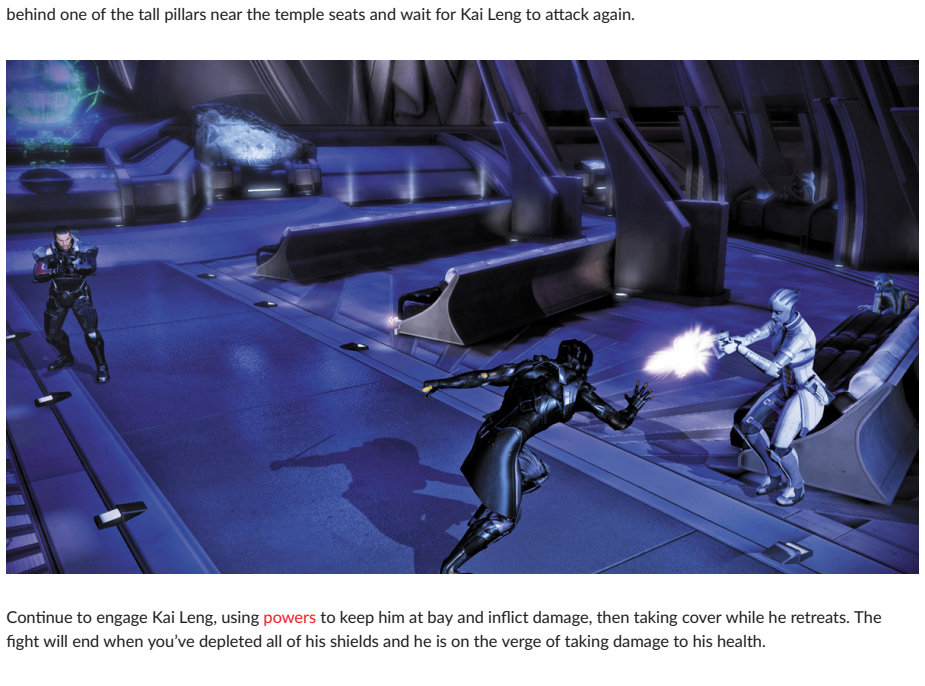
An Engineer's combat drone can add another offensive element into the mix and keep Kai Leng busy long enough to get a few good shots in. A Soldier's Adrenaline can also help by slowing time down—in effect, slowing down the assassin's movement around the temple.



Gang up on the Illusive Man's goon and inflict as much damage as you can. Once he has taken enough damage to deplete half of his barrier, he'll retreat to recuperate his shields while a Cerberus gunship opens fire on the temple's interior to keep you away from the vulnerable Leng.

He won't recover all of his barrier, so stay behind cover until the ship is gone, then immediately resume your attack. Stay away from him as he attempts to rush you and slice you with his sword, and dodge his Biotic projectiles.

Whittle down his health again until he backs off a second time and attempts to regenerate more of his shields. Take cover behind one of the tall pillars near the temple seats and wait for Kai Leng to attack again.

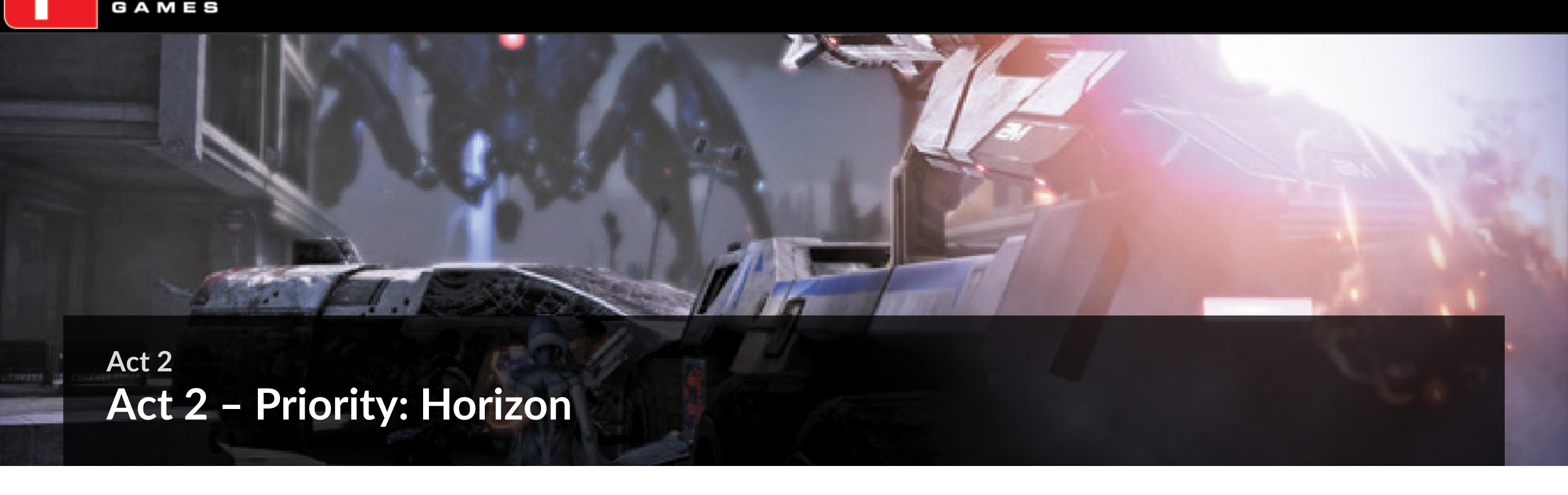


Continue to engage Kai Leng, using powers to keep him at bay and inflict damage, then taking cover while he retreats. The fight will end when you've depleted all of his shields and he is on the verge of taking damage to his health.

Despite your best efforts to defeat Kai Leng, his gunship interferes and grants the assassin a small window to overpower you and your squad and make off with the Prothean VI. You return to the Normandy empty-handed as more Reaper ships touch down on Thessia. Your mission is a failure.

Back on the Normandy, you must relay the failed mission status to the asari Councilor. She doesn't take the news well, and Thessia's fall means that she must now consider plans for the continuity of her species.

With no clear course on how to continue, you gather the crew in the Normandy war room. It's clear that there is only one thing left to do. You must go after the Illusive Man if the Crucible is to have a chance at completion.



Act 2 – Priority: Horizon

Cerberus may be using the Sanctuary facility on Horizon as a cover for secret activity. Land on Horizon and search for clues about Cerberus at Sanctuary.

MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: The Sanctuary's secret testing facility is comprised of several long, split halls and cluttered with machinery, tanks, desks, and debris for cover.

Aside from the landing zone where you'll encounter a rival sniper, sniper-proficient players will rarely find an opportunity to use their long-range skills despite the facility's long hallways.

The facility is full of all types of Reapers, ranging from Husks to Banshees, so you'll have to use all of your powers and tactical skills equally in order to survive.

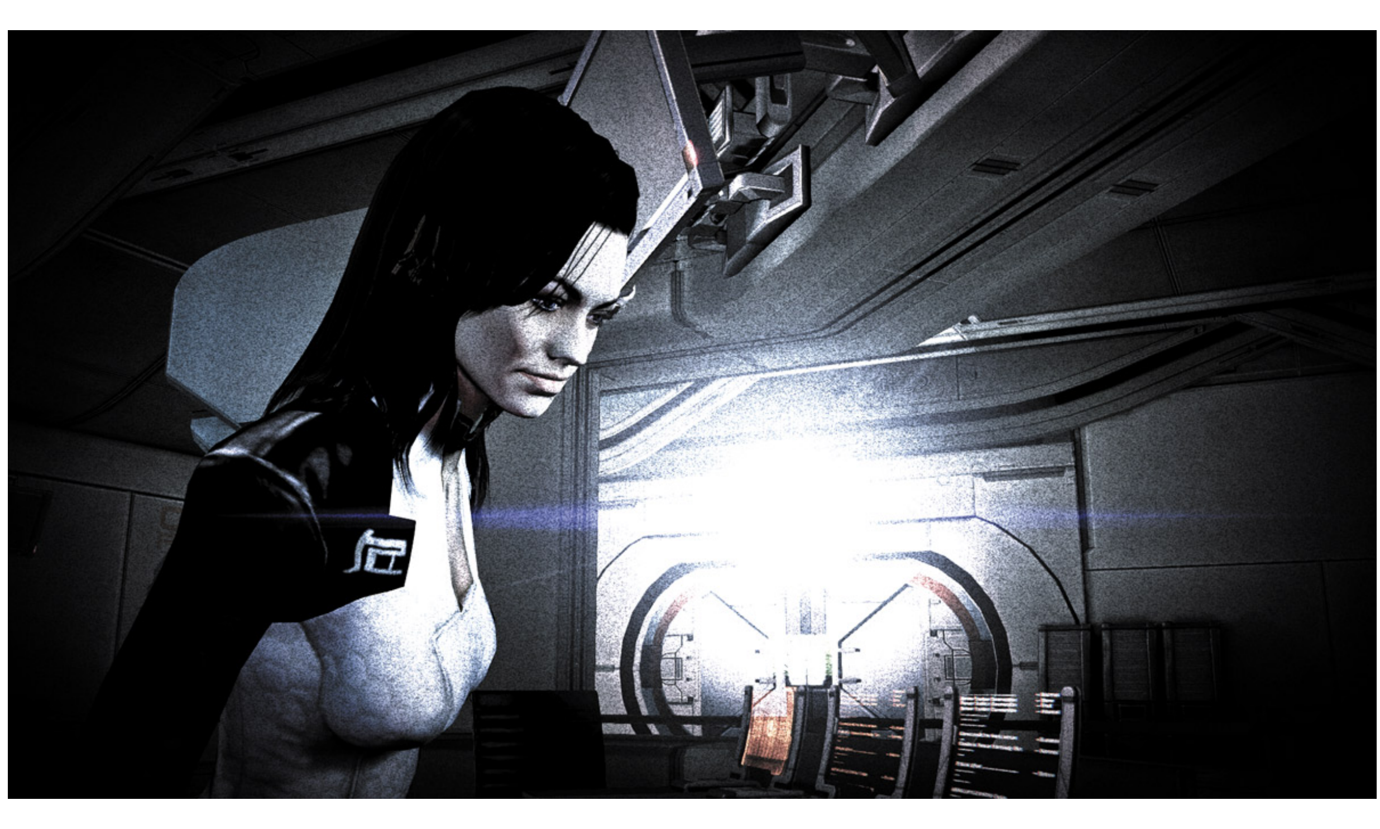
When encountering high-level Reaper groups, like Brutes and Banshees, focus on the Brutes first, since they are slower and thus easier targets.

Consequence Overview: As things begin to filter down to a final encounter, all chances to shape the war, gain War Assets, and accrue more Paragon/Renegade points become more and more scarce.

There is only one option for Paragon/Renegade points during this mission. As the final moments of the mission unfold, you'll have the opportunity to either calmly talk down your prey or threaten him into complying.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Equipment (x2)	Parts
Inventory Logs	Pistol Scope
M-12 Locust	Research Data (x3)
M-99 Saber	Rosenkov Materials
Medical Station (x2)	Shoulder Guard
Med Kit (x2)	Shotgun Blade Attachment



AROUND THE GALAXY

Mission Unlocks

N7: Communication Hub

Mission Locks

None

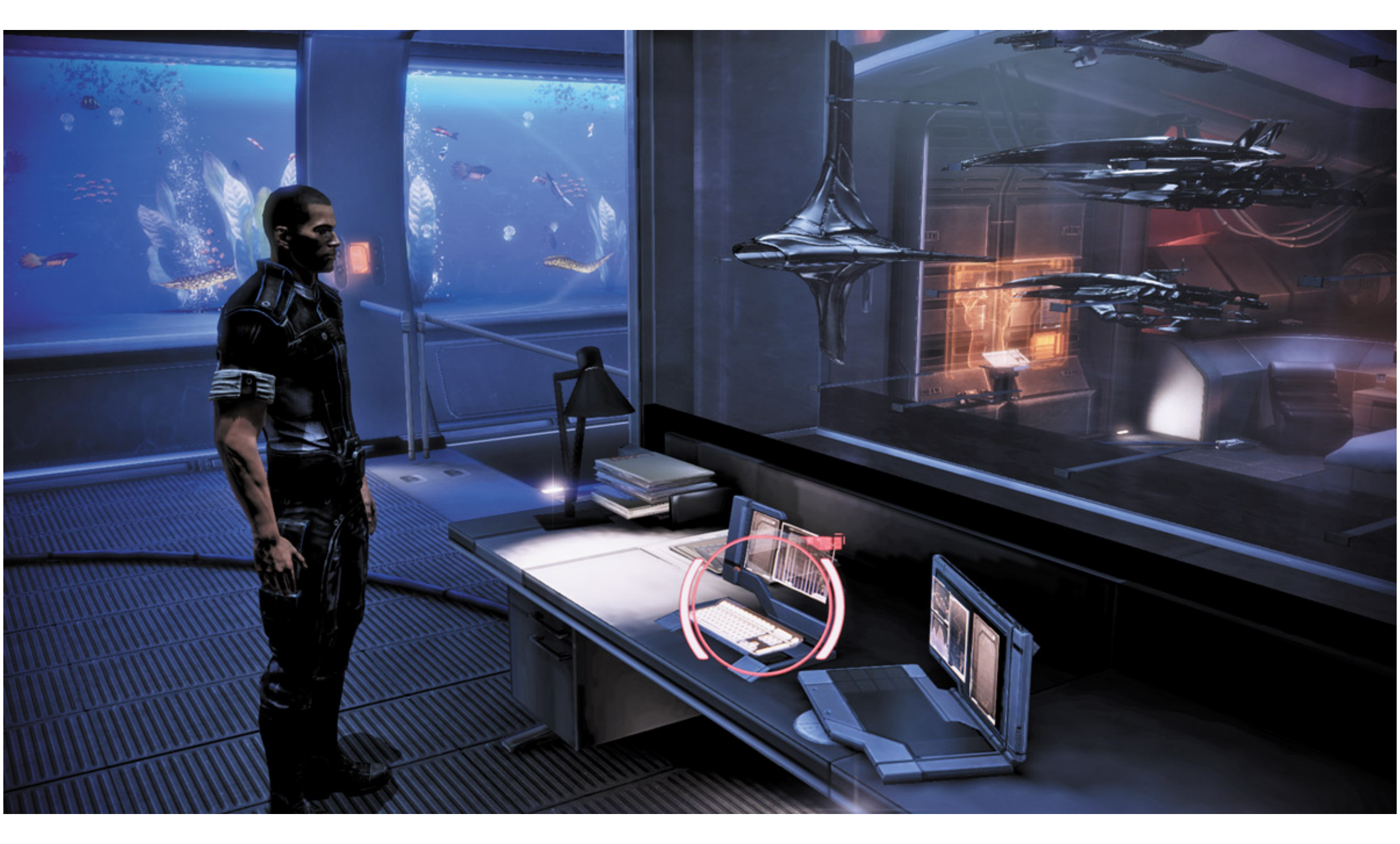
WAR PREPARATIONS

Things may not have worked out on Thessia as Kai Leng, the Illusive Man, and the rest of Cerberus threw off your plan.

The fall of Thessia may weigh heavily on your mind, but your goal is less clear than before. Your next step, however, has temporarily shifted away from the Reapers.

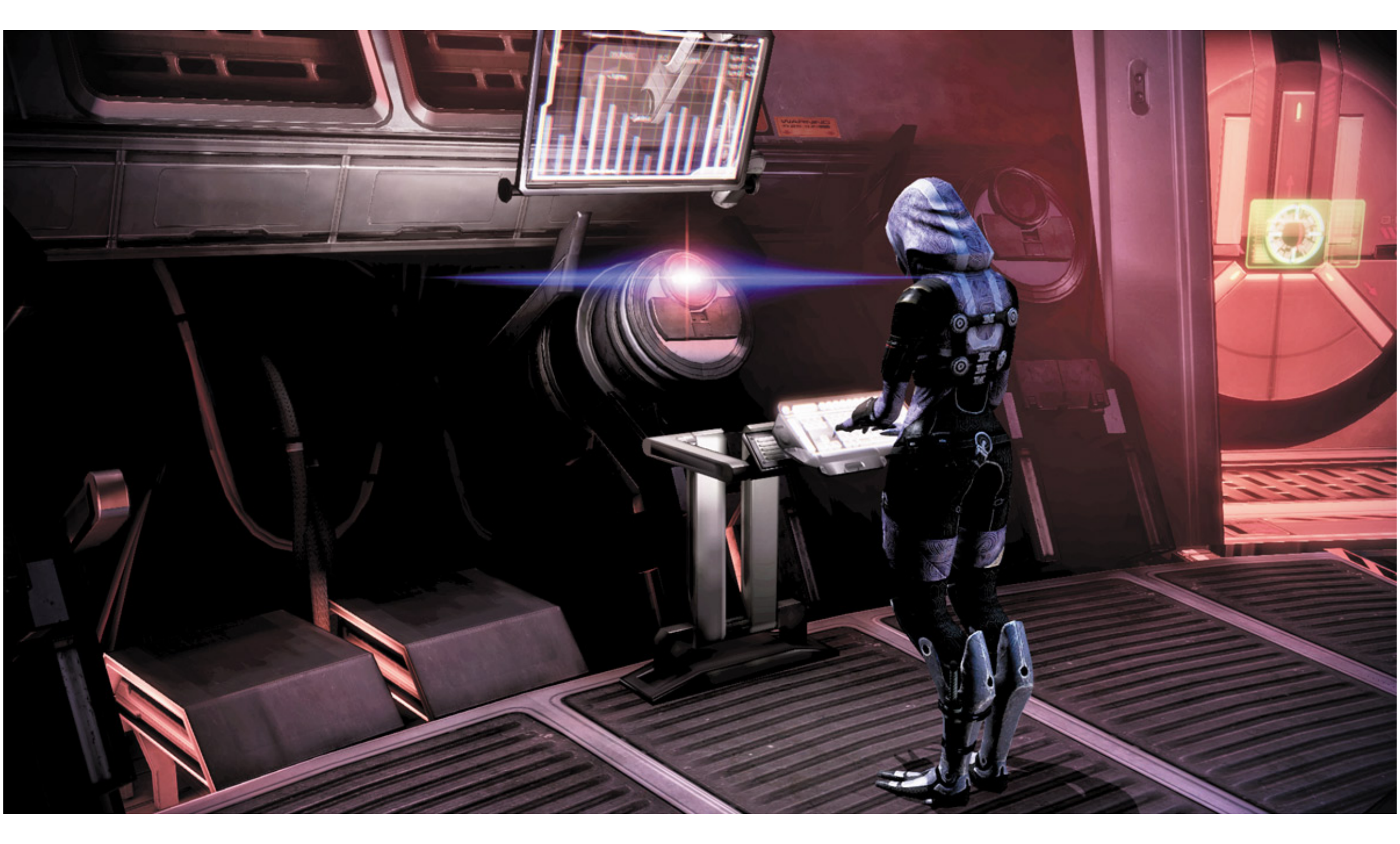
It's clear now that Cerberus will not stop at anything to control the Reapers and keep you from destroying them. The only way to destroy the Reapers is to remove Cerberus first.

CHECK YOUR E-MAIL



You've got plenty of motivation to find the Illusive Man, but if you need some more, stop by your private terminal and check your e-mail. You've got a very special e-mail that might help light a fire.

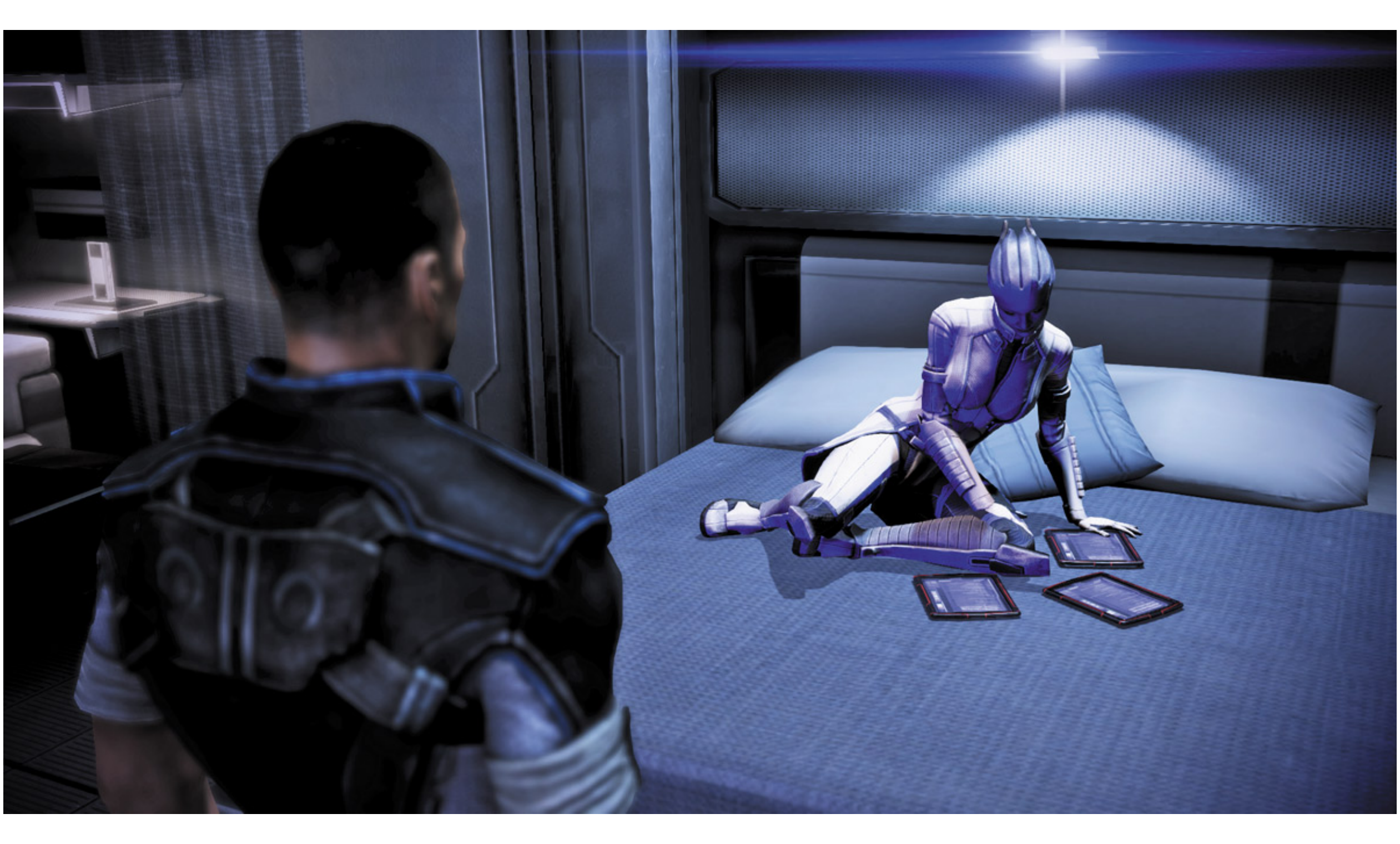
SPEAK TO TALI



Stop by the elevator on the crew deck to speak to Tali. Share your thoughts on recent events and let off some steam. She has some words of encouragement that you may want to hear before the next mission.

If you'd like to get straight to the next mission, skip to the "Investigate Sanctuary" section later in this guide.

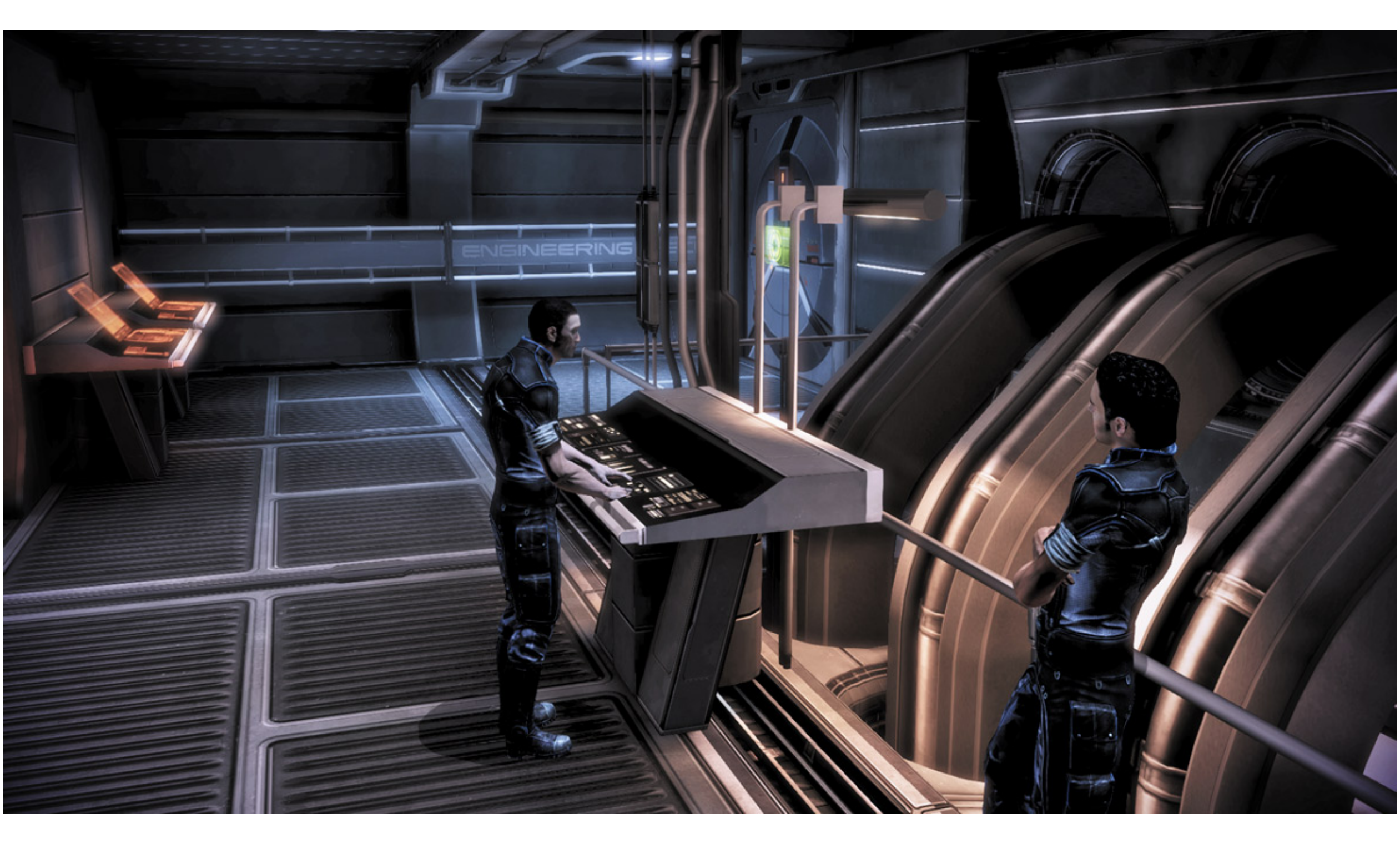
SPEAK TO LIARA



The occupation of Thessia has been hard on Liara. Stop by her office and visit with her to get her thoughts on the situation.

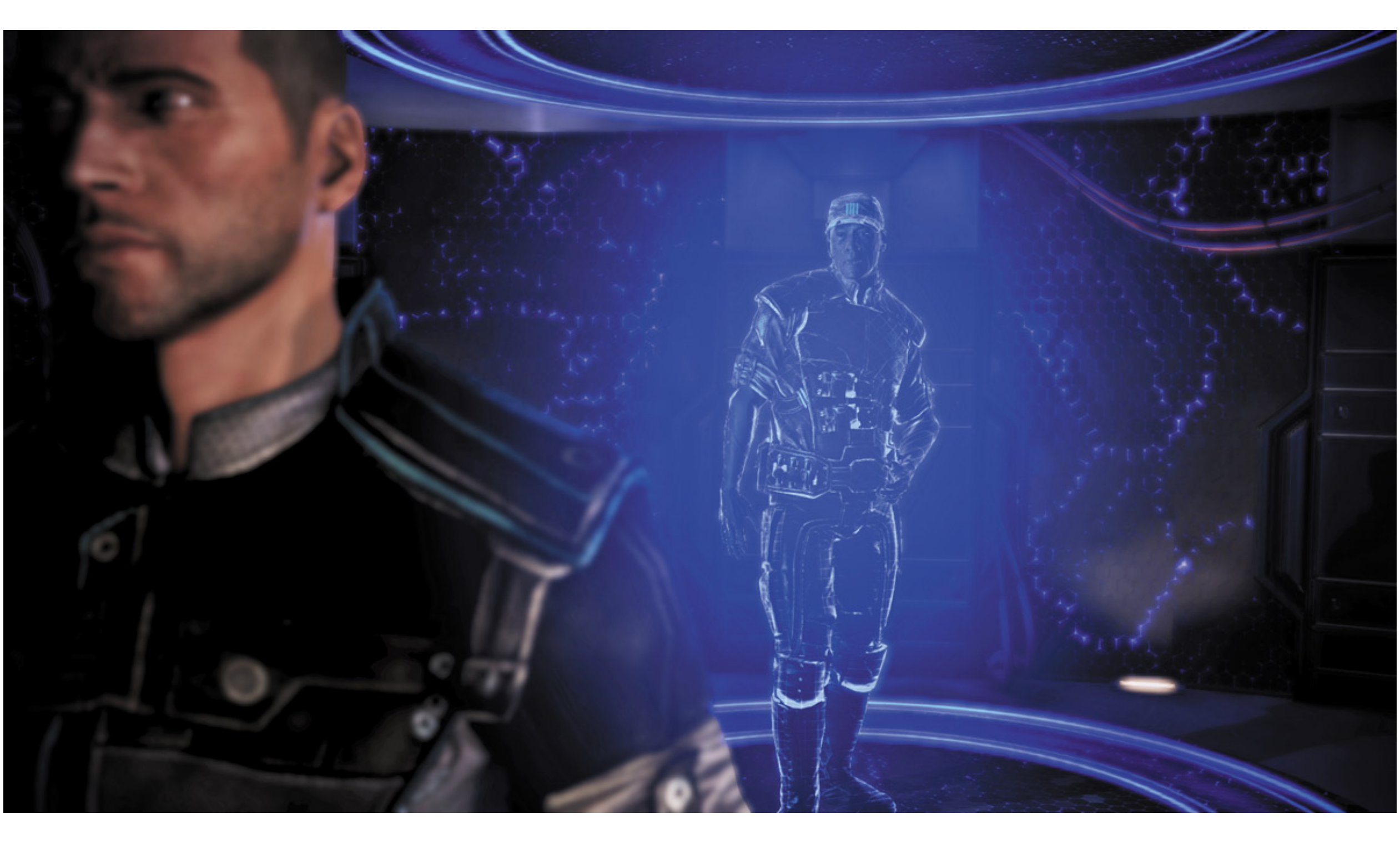
Listen to her and act on the Paragon decision point in this conversation to ease her guilt.

SPEAK TO ENGINEER ADAMS AND KAIDAN/ASHLEY



Engineer Adams and Kaidan (or Ashley) may also have some insight to share on Liara's current condition. Stop by the engineering deck and have a chat with them.

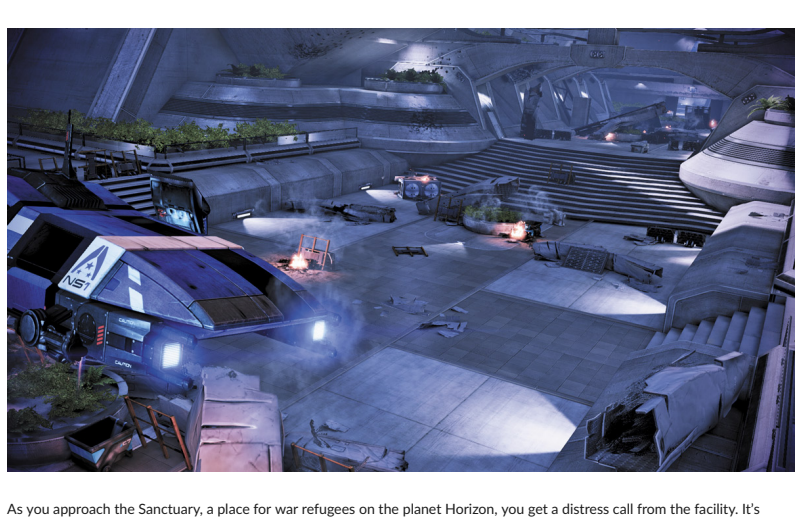
SPEAK TO ADMIRAL ANDERSON



Before setting out on the next mission, go to the vid-com station in the war room and speak with Admiral Anderson. He's got some words of encouragement should you need them.

Act 2

Investigate Sanctuary

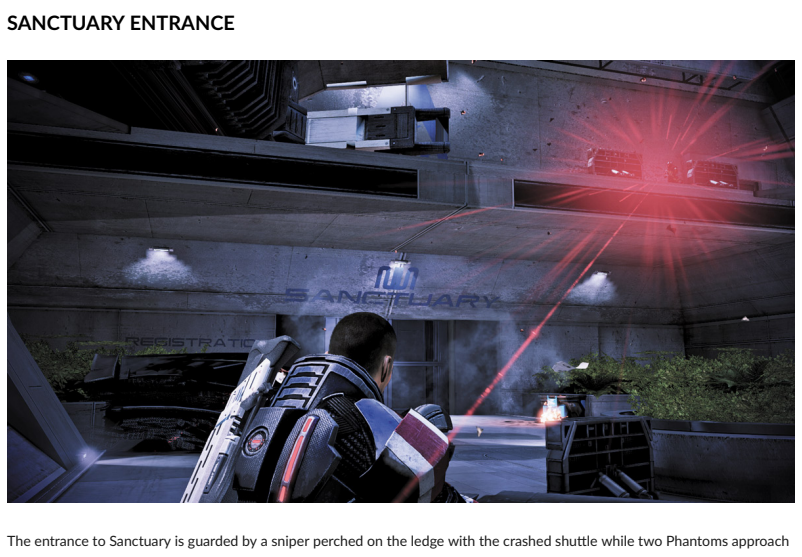


As you approach the Sanctuary, a place for war refugees on the planet Horizon, you get a distress call from the facility. It's Miranda's sister. She claims the facility is not safe and urges you to stay away.

The landing zone is clear when you touch down. Walk forward to explore the Sanctuary facility and go up the stairs. As you approach the top of the stairs, a Cerberus shuttle crashes directly ahead of you. It's being chased by a Reaper Harvester.

The Harvester soon loses interest in the crashed shuttle, leaving the three Cerberus troopers to evacuate the downed transport unit.

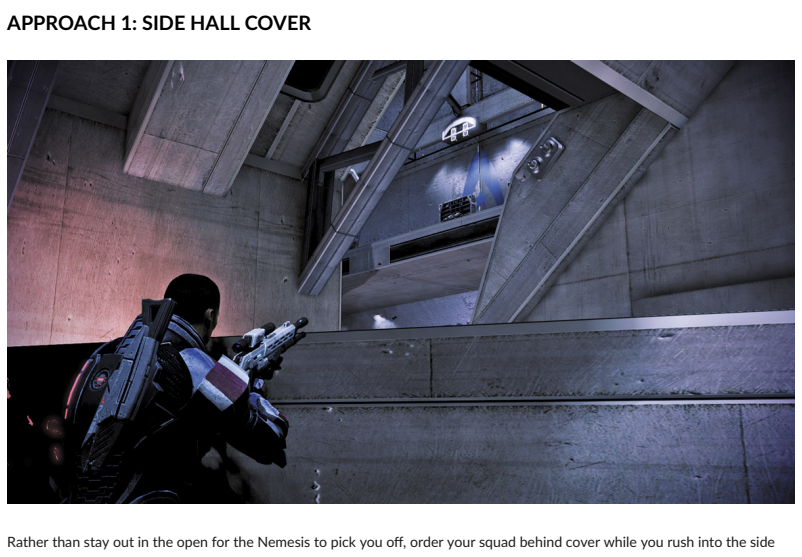
SANCTUARY ENTRANCE



The entrance to Sanctuary is guarded by a sniper perched on the ledge with the crashed shuttle while two Phantoms approach you on the lower area. The area between you and the door is covered with rubble but flanked on the right side by a small hallway that provides excellent cover from the sniper.

The sniper, a Nemesis, is well trained and capable of depleting your entire shield with a single shot. If you engage the Phantoms while your shield is gone, they can slice through you with one swipe.

APPROACH 1: SIDE HALL COVER



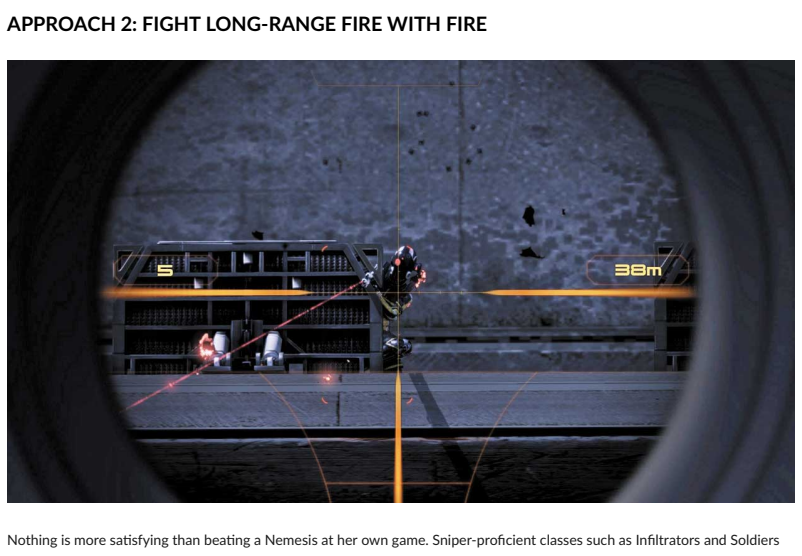
Rather than stay out in the open for the Nemesis to pick you off, order your squad behind cover while you rush into the side hall. From here, you can slowly peek your head out and open fire on the Nemesis in his perch.

Adept players can use Throw, Singularity, or even Pull to yank the sniper out of position. Other powers like Warp or an Engineer's Overload can also shake the Nemesis out of cover. Follow up with explosive power combinations or weapons fire to take it out.

Once the sniper is out of the way, turn to the Phantoms and open fire. They're slippery and hard to hit, so use powers to either slow them down, knock them off balance, or slow down time (if you're a Soldier).

Combine your squad's powers to maximize damage and stay on the move as much as possible to avoid getting sliced and diced.

APPROACH 2: FIGHT LONG-RANGE FIRE WITH FIRE



Nothing is more satisfying than beating a Nemesis at her own game. Sniper-proficient classes such as Infiltrators and Soldiers can equip their most powerful sniper rifle, such as a level IV or V M-98 Widow, and take aim at the sniper on the far ledge.

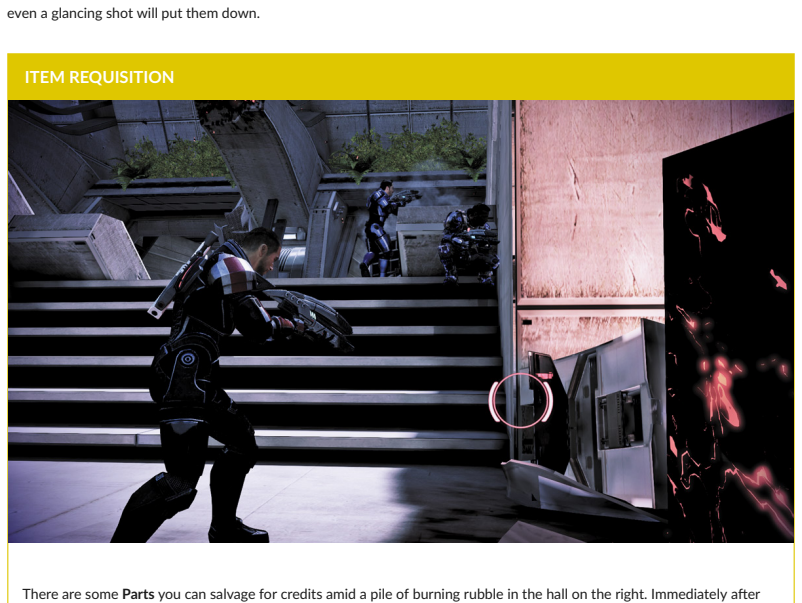
If you're an Infiltrator, activate your Tactical Cloak before you zoom in. Soldiers should activate Adrenaline before taking aim as well.

If you're another class such as an Engineer or Vanguard, use a combat drone or your squadmates as bait. Wait for the Nemesis to pop his head out to take a shot, then tag his head with a well-placed shot.

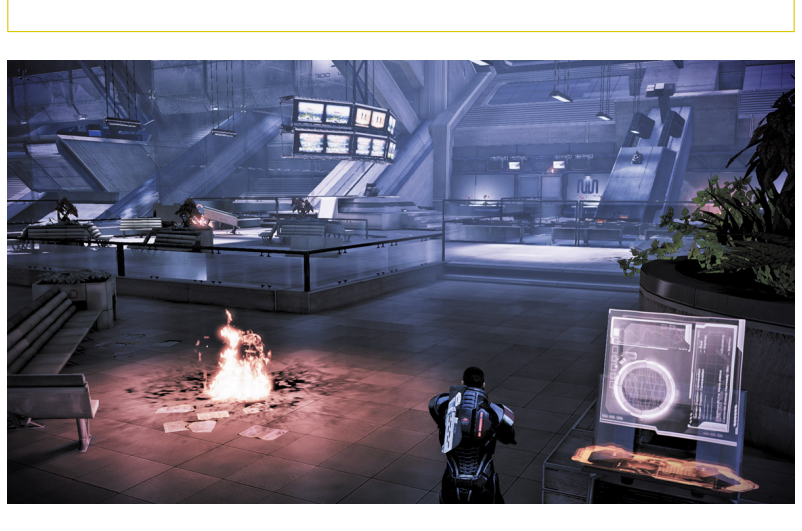
The Phantoms are also susceptible to a sniper's headshots, but to ensure they die at the end of your sniper's scope, order your squad members to attack them with power combos and weaken them prior to your shot.

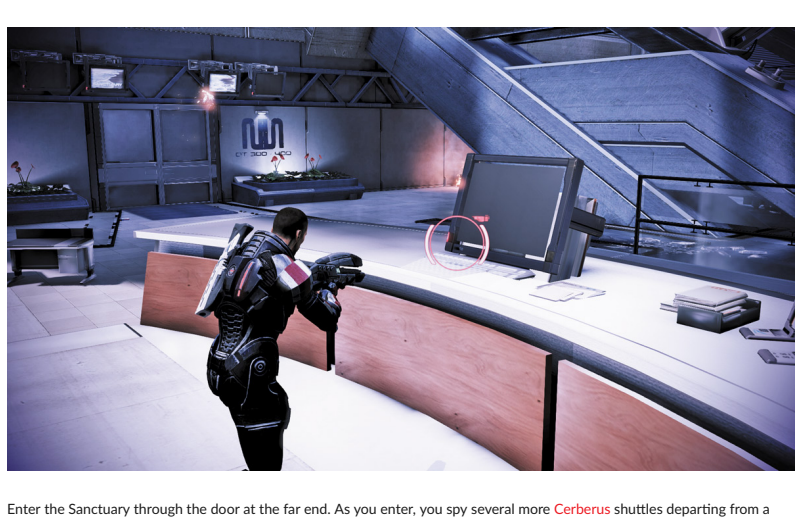
Even if you don't get a headshot, your squad's attacks should either slow them down or bring them to the brink of defeat, so even a glancing shot will put them down.

ITEM REQUISITION



There are some **Parts** you can salvage for credits amid a pile of burning rubble in the hall on the right. Immediately after entering the next room to explore Sanctuary, turn left to find a **Medical Station** on the right wall.





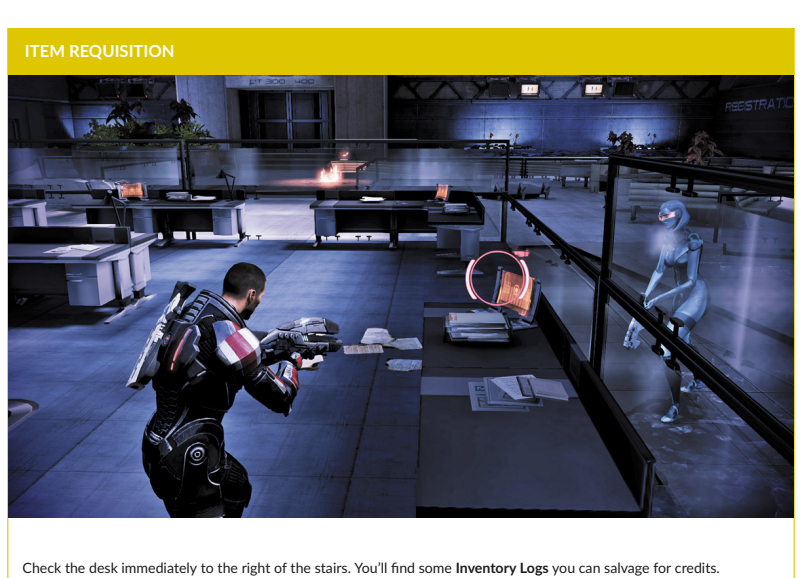
Enter the Sanctuary through the door at the far end. As you enter, you spy several more Cerberus shuttles departing from a distant tower. The area around you is quiet, however, so you're free to explore.

Begin by checking the Log at the far left side of the reception area. It shows video footage of the hundreds of refugees seeking help in Sanctuary. When you're done, walk over to the desk area on the right, just right of the stairs, and examine the Logs and the PDA there to get more information on Sanctuary.

TIP

You can also stop at the large window to the left of the entrance to the welcome area and click to engage in a short dialogue with your crew.

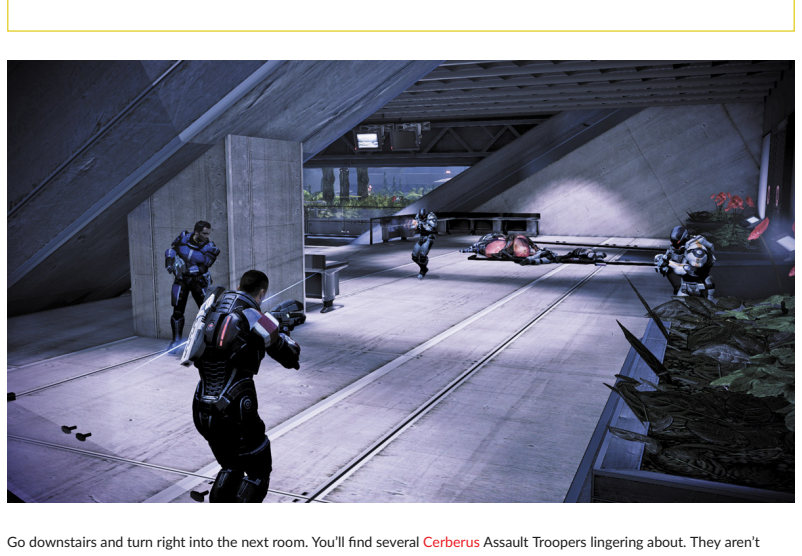
ITEM REQUISITION



Check the desk immediately to the right of the stairs. You'll find some **Inventory Logs** you can salvage for credits.

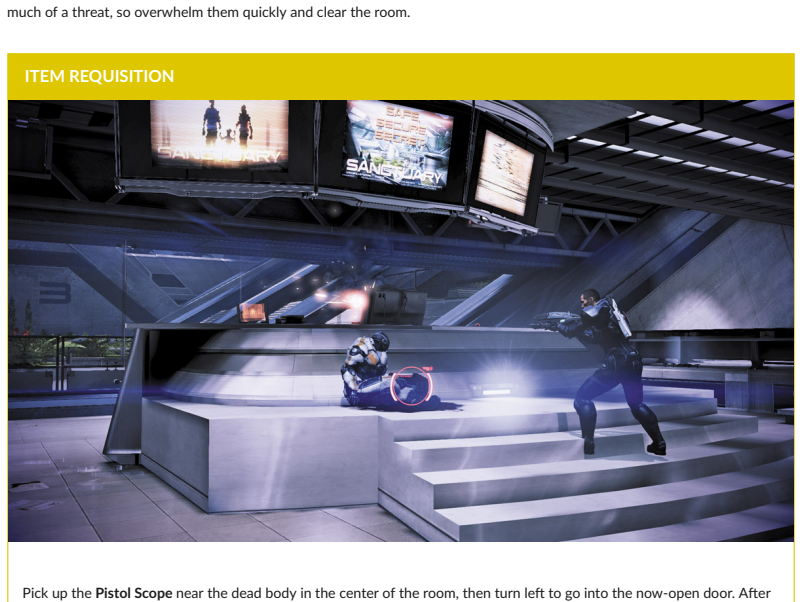
NOTE

There are two more Logs downstairs near the two crashed shuttles. Examine them if you want to hear more about Sanctuary and what transpired there.

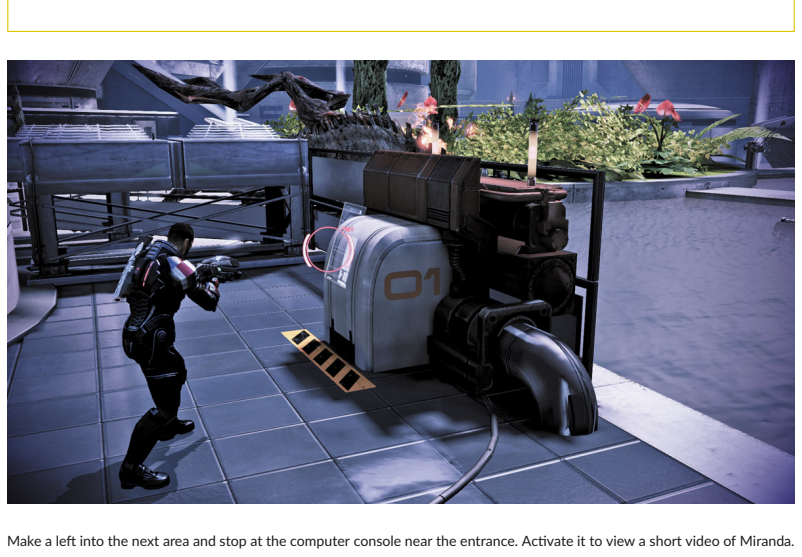


Go downstairs and turn right into the next room. You'll find several Cerberus Assault Troopers lingering about. They aren't much of a threat, so overwhelm them quickly and clear the room.

ITEM REQUISITION



Pick up the **Pistol Scope** near the dead body in the center of the room, then turn left to go into the now-open door. After entering the next area, turn right immediately to find an **Equipment** console on the wall. Salvage it to gain some credits.



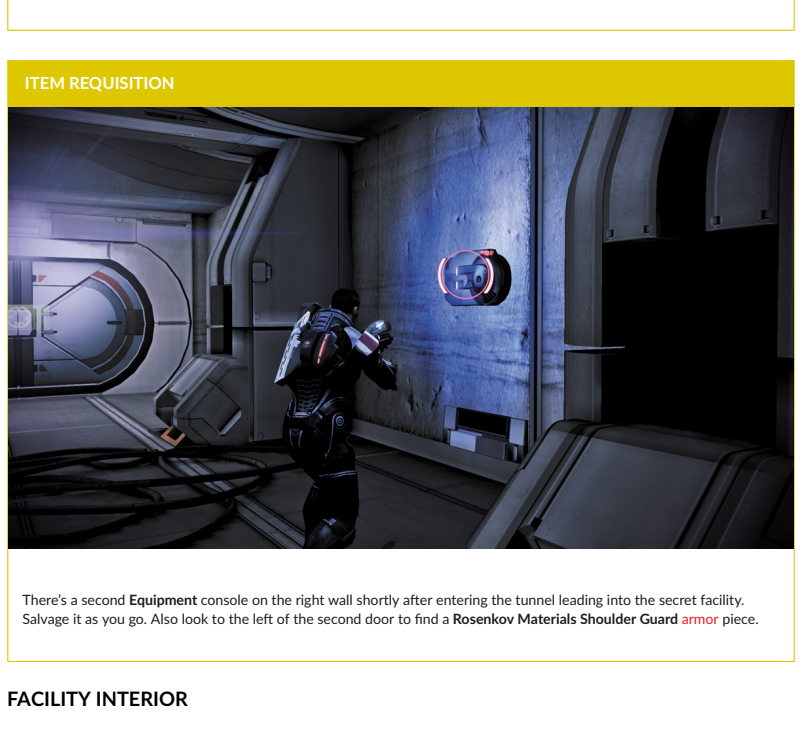
Make a left into the next area and stop at the computer console near the entrance. Activate it to view a short video of Miranda. She claims that Sanctuary is not a refugee camp after all. It's a Cerberus testing facility run by her father.

After watching the video, turn right and walk over to the water pump. Activate it to empty the large body of water nearby. It reveals a ladder going down to a secret passage leading to the facility interior.

NOTE

If you went to the Citadel after receiving Miranda's e-mail earlier in the game, this may shed some light as to what she was trying to uncover. In fact, you need to speak to Miranda while on the Citadel to learn this information.

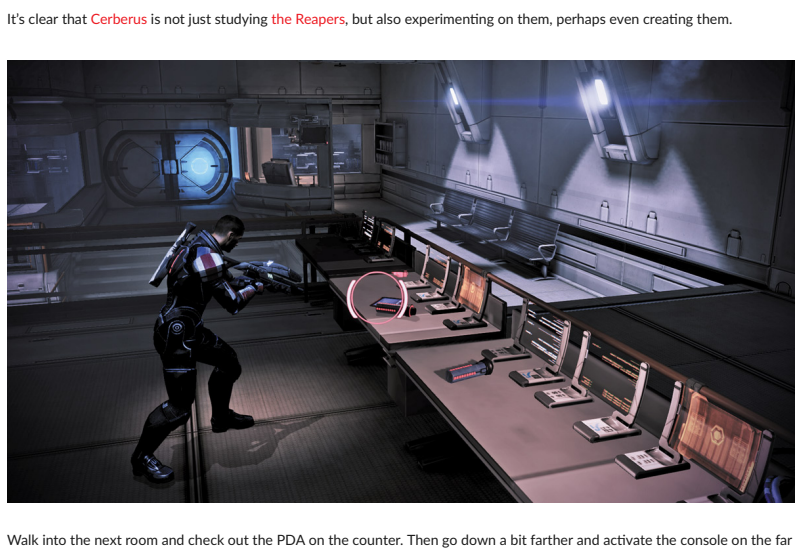
ITEM REQUISITION



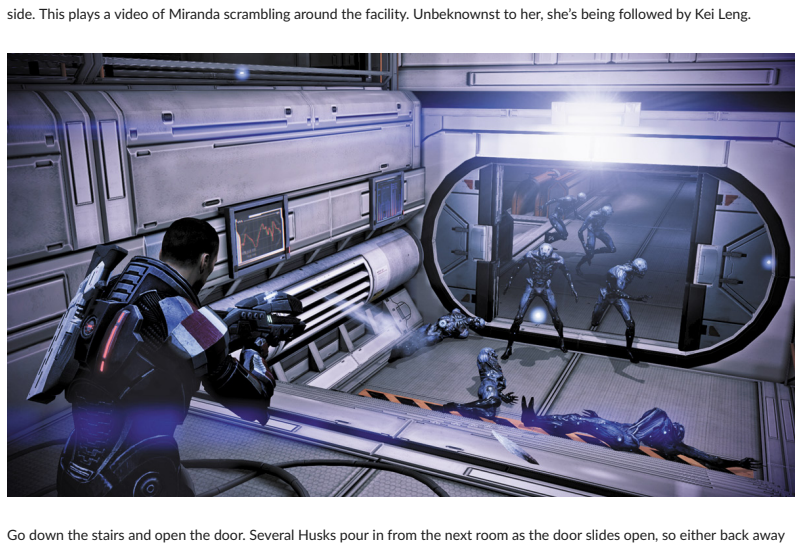
There's a second **Equipment** console on the right wall shortly after entering the tunnel leading into the secret facility. Salvage it as you go. Also look to the left of the second door to find a **Rosenkov Materials Shoulder Guard** armor piece.

FACILITY INTERIOR

The facility's interior is cluttered with machinery, computer consoles, and tanks for various types of strange experiments. Activate the center console in the first room to turn on all of the computer screens around you. One of the consoles turns the lights on in the next room, a massive chamber full of Husks.



Walk into the next room and check out the PDA on the counter. Then go down a bit farther and activate the console on the far side. This plays a video of Miranda scrambling around the facility. Unbeknownst to her, she's being followed by Kei Leng.



Go down the stairs and open the door. Several Husks pour in from the next room as the door slides open, so either back away as you shoot the attacking Reapers or use a power like Nova to knock them all away.

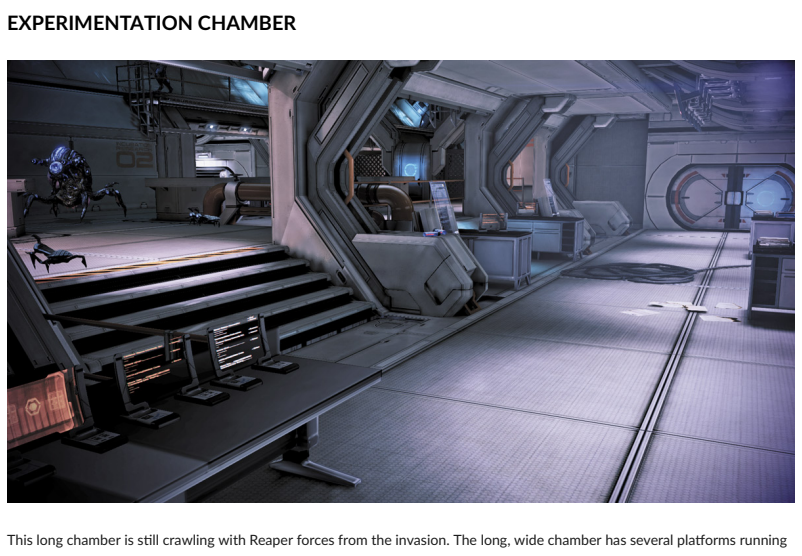
Charged melee attacks also work against these creatures, so eliminate them quickly before they can swarm around you.

Creep into the next room and turn left. There may be some more Husks rushing up the stairs toward you. Eliminate this group as well. With the room clear, continue downstairs and examine the two Logs on the desks before entering the long experimentation chamber.

TIP

There is a large machine that periodically drops down across the chamber's center. When it does, it blocks your line of sight across the chamber, so time your attacks in conjunction with the machine's pattern to maximize your damage output.

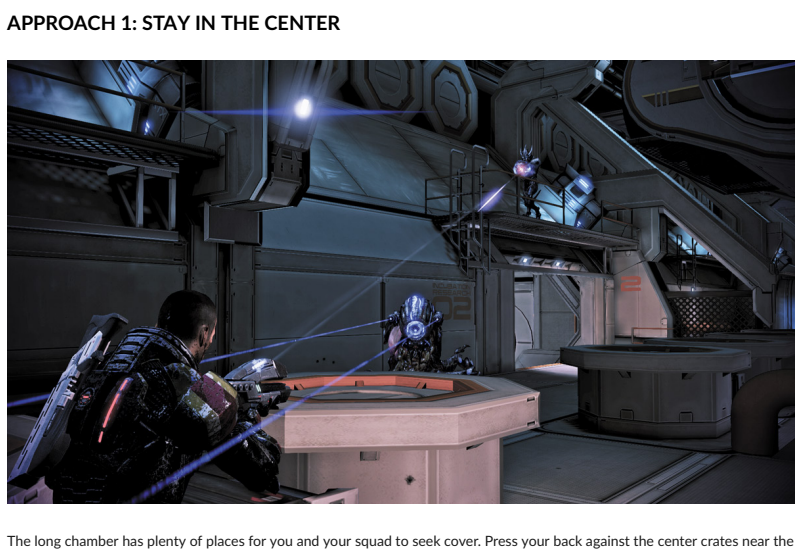
EXPERIMENTATION CHAMBER



This long chamber is still crawling with Reaper forces from the invasion. The long, wide chamber has several platforms running along the top left and right where Marauders can attack from a distance.

Meanwhile, a Ravager and a Banshee slowly stalk up and down the center section of the chamber, launching their devastating assaults. The chamber, however, has a series of labs running along the right side that can provide a respite from the action and lots of tubes, consoles, and other equipment running down the middle that can provide cover.

APPROACH 1: STAY IN THE CENTER



The long chamber has plenty of places for you and your squad to seek cover. Press your back against the center crates near the chamber entrance and get a good view down the length of the chamber.

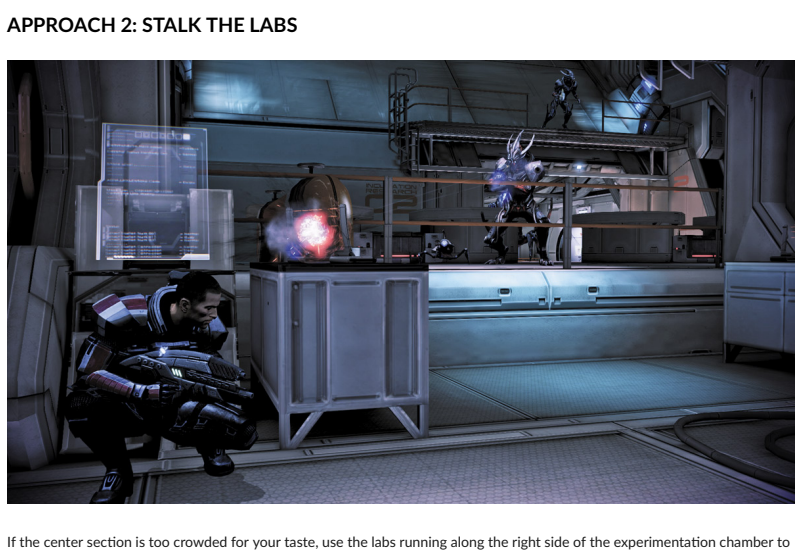
Order your squad to engage the Banshee while you target the Marauders. Make sure to take them out first. They can create a lot of problems for you while battling the other Reapers on the lower level.

If any Marauders drop down to the lower level, use powers like Singularity to create choke points near the center aisle and redirect them. Eliminate the Marauders first, then turn to the Banshee.

Keep her off balance and split her attention by focusing all of your squad's attacks on only her. Stay on the move—duck back into the first lab if necessary—and avoid the Banshee's radial attack that removes your shields.

If you keep her off balance and follow up with heavy fire and explosive power combos, she'll fall in no time. With the Banshee gone, you can now turn to the Ravager and destroy it from the safety of your covered position.

APPROACH 2: STALK THE LABS



If the center section is too crowded for your taste, use the labs running along the right side of the experimentation chamber to get a jump on the enemies in the center section. Open the door to pass from one lab into another, then turn left to face the chamber's center section.

Stay behind cover of the consoles separating the lab from the center section, and launch your assault on the Ravagers and Marauders from here.

Since you're behind decent cover in the labs, order your crew to attack the Marauders with power combinations or use powers to pressure them off their elevated positions.

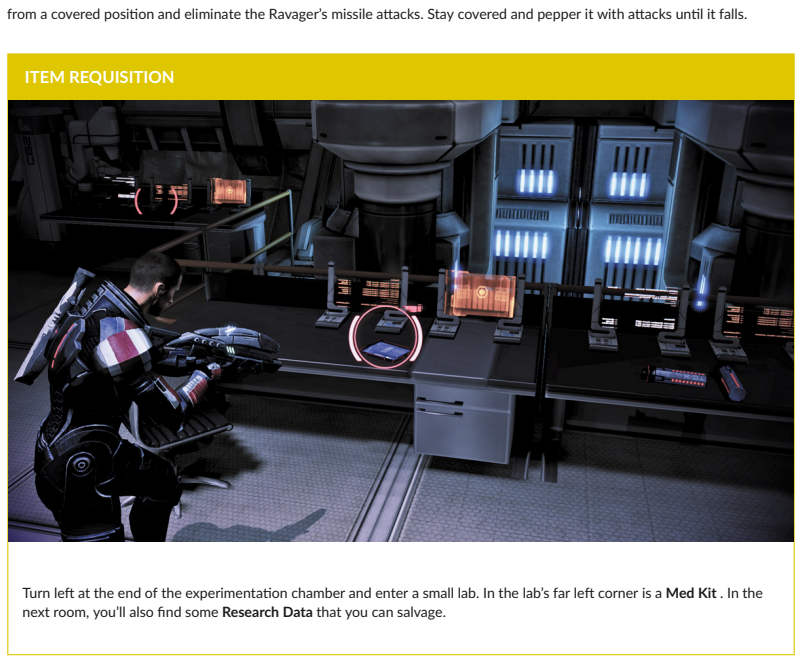
When they come down, increase the intensity of your attacks by either lobbing grenades or using power combos of your own. If you get far enough in the second lab, you can get a good view of the Marauder perched atop the left side of the center section.

Bring him down if your squad hasn't already, and exterminate it.

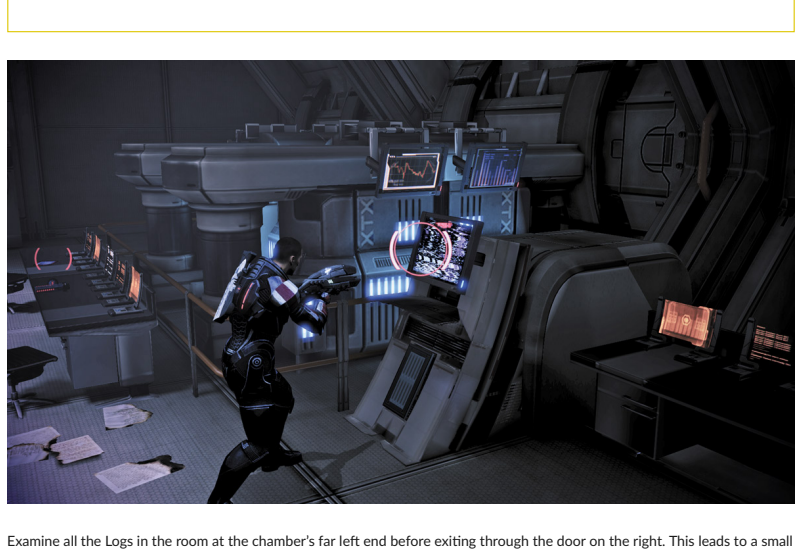
Once the Marauders are down, turn all of your attention to the Banshee. The Ravagers will continue to fire on you, but they won't move as much as the Banshee will. The Banshee will attack you up close, so use powers like Concussive Shot, Shockwave, or Nova to keep her at bay and follow up with heavy fire and other power combos.

Finally, with the Banshee out of the way, turn on the Ravager. The lab provides an excellent vantage point from which to attack from a covered position and eliminate the Ravager's missile attacks. Stay covered and pepper it with attacks until it falls.

ITEM REQUISITION

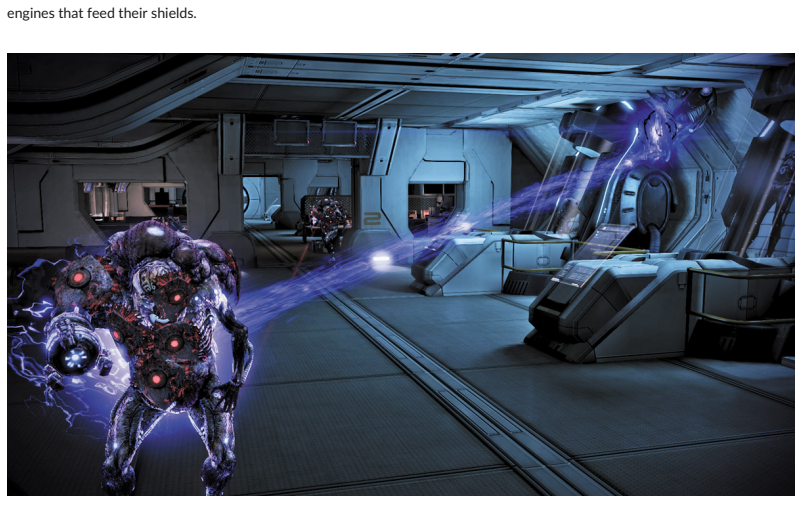


Turn left at the end of the experimentation chamber and enter a small lab. In the lab's far left corner is a **Med Kit** . In the next room, you'll also find some **Research Data** that you can salvage.



Examine all the Logs in the room at the chamber's far left end before exiting through the door on the right. This leads to a small laboratory with a computer console showing a static-filled screen. Fix the screen to show Miranda's findings about the Sanctuary facility. After activating the console, examine the PDA on the desk on the left.

Go up the stairs on the left and begin searching the facility's perimeter. Turn left at the top of the stairs and you'll find entryways to two hallways, side by side. Each hallway leads into a bifurcated lab room full of Cannibals, Marauders, and barrier engines that feed their shields.



Station one or two squadmates near one hallway entrance while you take the other. Since the Reapers in the long halls are fed by barrier engines, eliminate the engines first. Once the barrier shields are down, turn your attention on the Reapers down the halls.

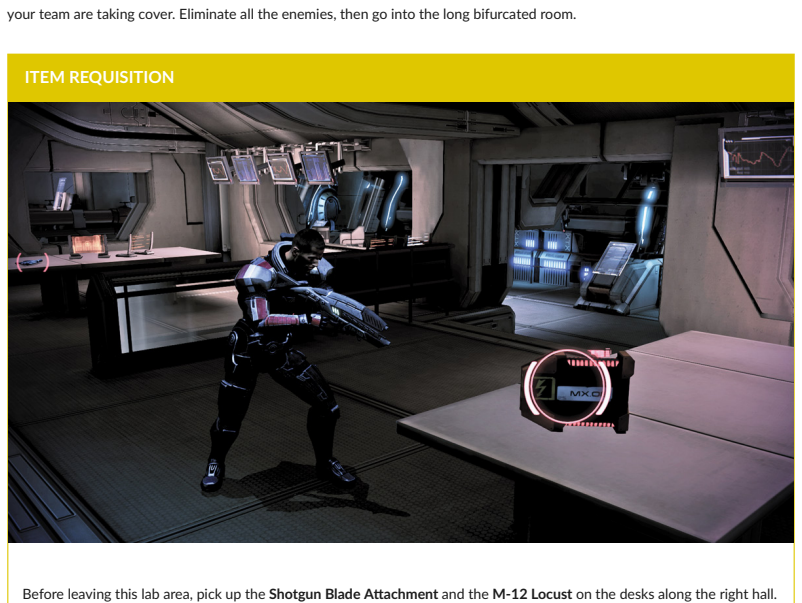
Hold your position at the entrance to the halls and let the Reapers come to you. Alternate between using heavy fire and power combinations to keep the Reapers away and steadily dwindle their health.

If you have the ability to use Defense or combat drones, launch one deep into one or both of the halls, and distract the Reapers even more. When the Reapers turn their backs to you to deal with the drones, increase your attacks to obliterate them.

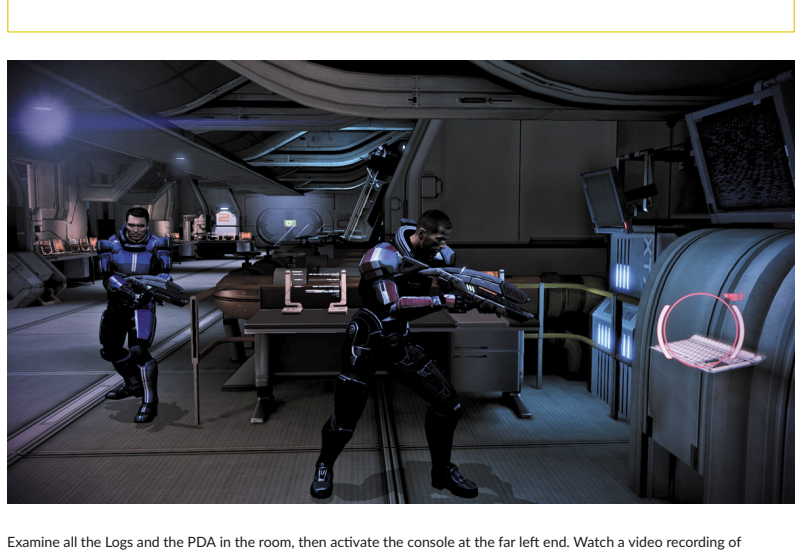
When the Reapers bunch up together, take advantage and use explosive attacks to dish out damage to the group rather than just one foe at a time.

Also use powers like Shockwave and Throw to hurl enemies back down the hall and away from the entrances where you and your team are taking cover. Eliminate all the enemies, then go into the long bifurcated room.

ITEM REQUISITION

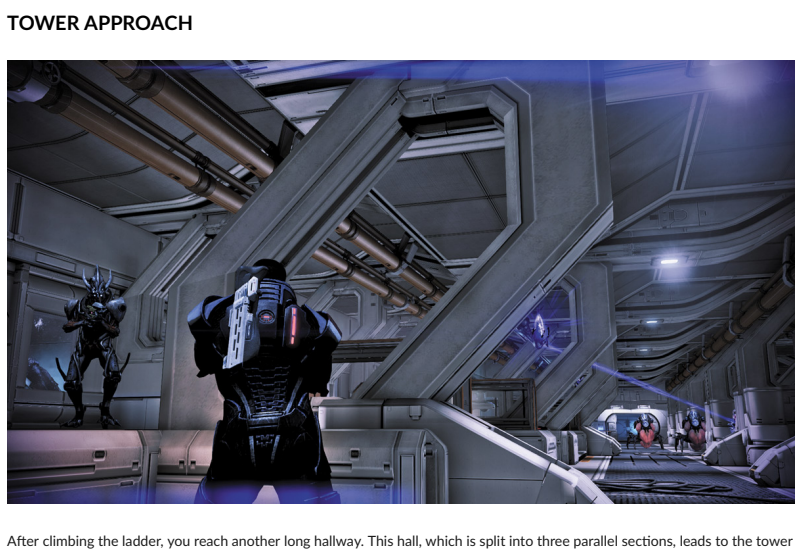


Before leaving this lab area, pick up the **Shotgun Blade Attachment** and the **M-12 Locust** on the desks along the right hall.



Examine all the Logs and the PDA in the room, then activate the console at the far left end. Watch a video recording of Miranda's findings, then locate the ladder directly behind you. Go up the ladder to reach the next floor.

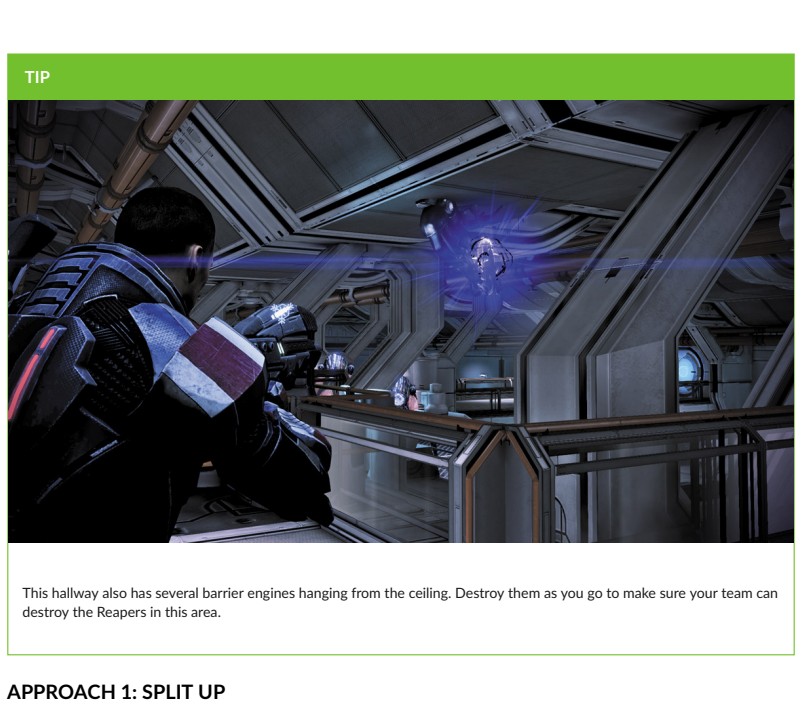
TOWER APPROACH



After climbing the ladder, you reach another long hallway. This hall, which is split into three parallel sections, leads to the tower access point. On the left is a raised platform running about three-quarters the length of the main center hall.

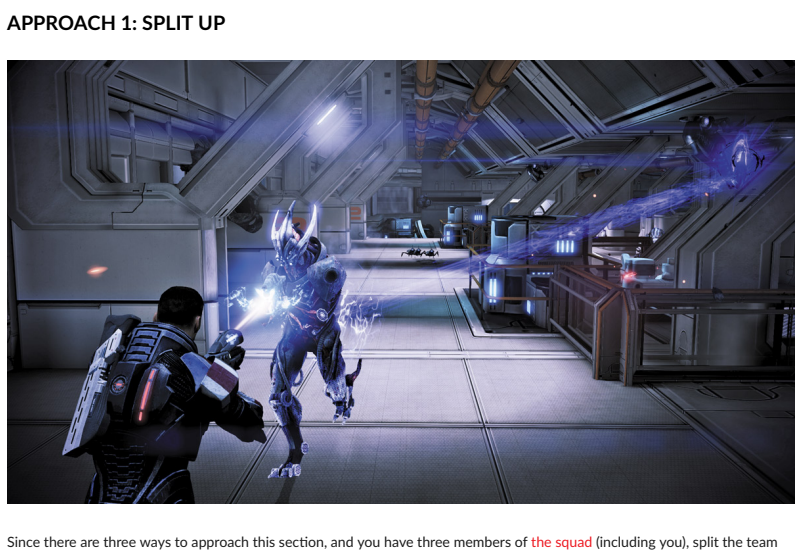
Down and on the right of the main hall is a side passage, split in the middle by a bridge. The passages on the right, however, are lower in elevation than the main hall. Between you and the tower access point are several Cannibals, Marauders, and Ravagers.

TIP



This hallway also has several barrier engines hanging from the ceiling. Destroy them as you go to make sure your team can destroy the Reapers in this area.

APPROACH 1: SPLIT UP



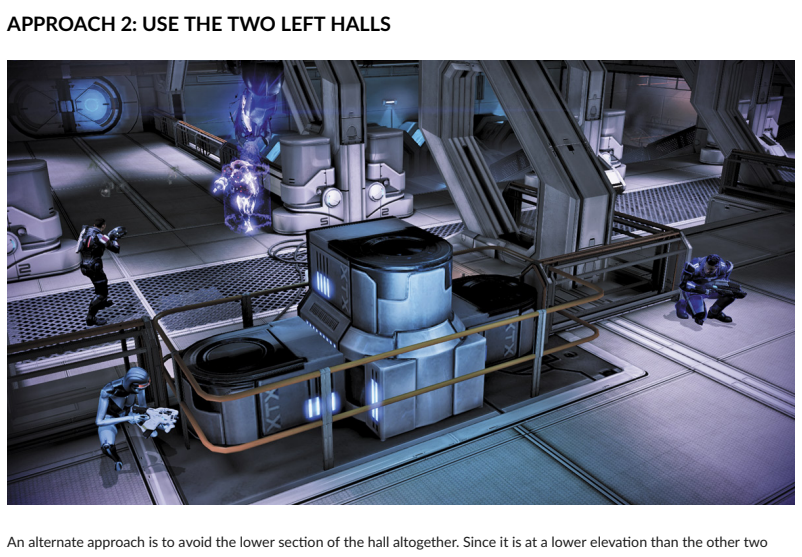
Since there are three ways to approach this section, and you have three members of the squad (including you), split the team among all three hallways sections.

This tactic is better suited for players who feel comfortable engaging in close-quarters combat, since you'll have to slowly advance down the hall, pressing the action forward.

As you do, you'll also need to direct your team from cover to cover, which may allow speedy Marauders or Cannibals to get within close proximity of your position. Knock enemies away and slowly march your entire team down all three sections of the hall.

Rely on disruptive powers to keep your enemies away while you advance down the hall, inflicting damage and putting them down with shotgun blasts or explosive power combos between your squad members.

APPROACH 2: USE THE TWO LEFT HALLS

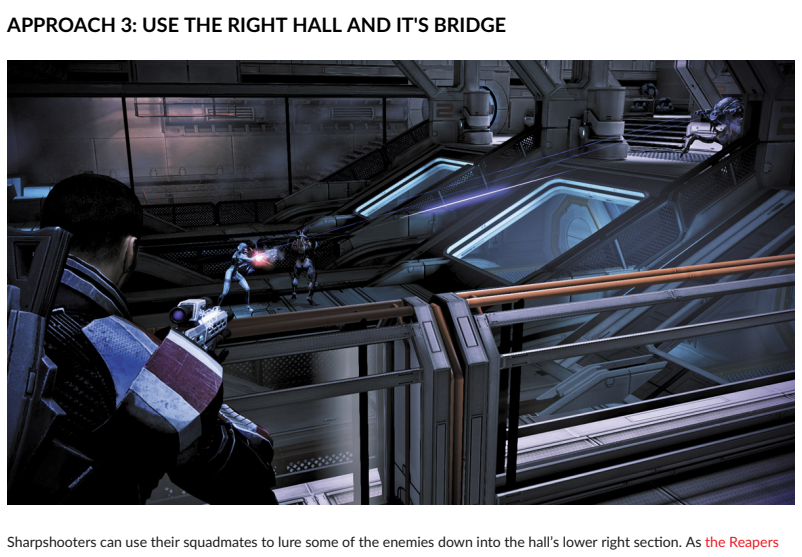


An alternate approach is to avoid the lower section of the hall altogether. Since it is at a lower elevation than the other two halls, you'll gain a bit of cover, but at the cost of a better line of sight.

Instead, post two squad members near the beginning of the far left hall, while you take the fight down the center hall. Clear a path to the far end, then turn left and swoop back around the end of the hall's far right section.

This way you'll pinch the enemies attacking your squadmates in the far right hallway from both ends. Press the fire inward and wipe them out. This is also a good tactic for luring the Ravagers away from the center hall.

APPROACH 3: USE THE RIGHT HALL AND IT'S BRIDGE

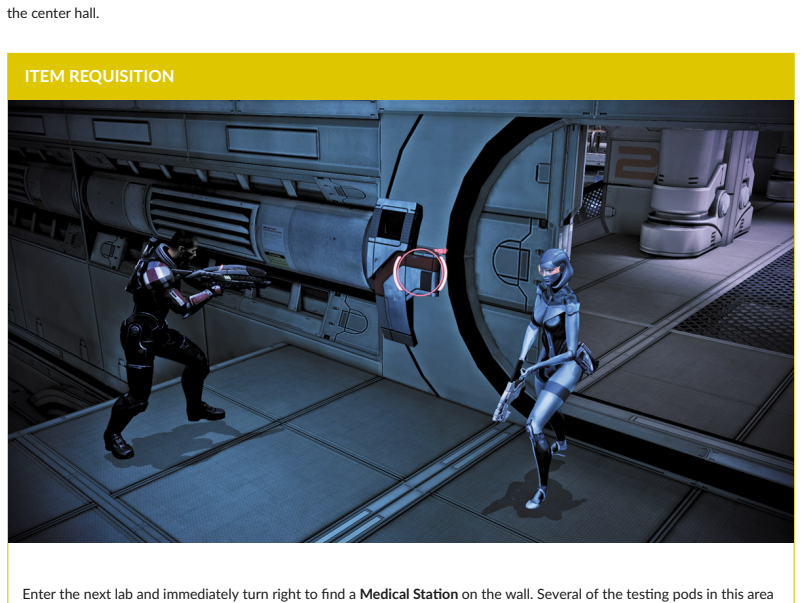


Sharpshooters can use their squadmates to lure some of the enemies down into the hall's lower right section. As the Reapers engage your squad on the lower level, rush to the bridge that splits the lower hallway into two sections and open fire from above.

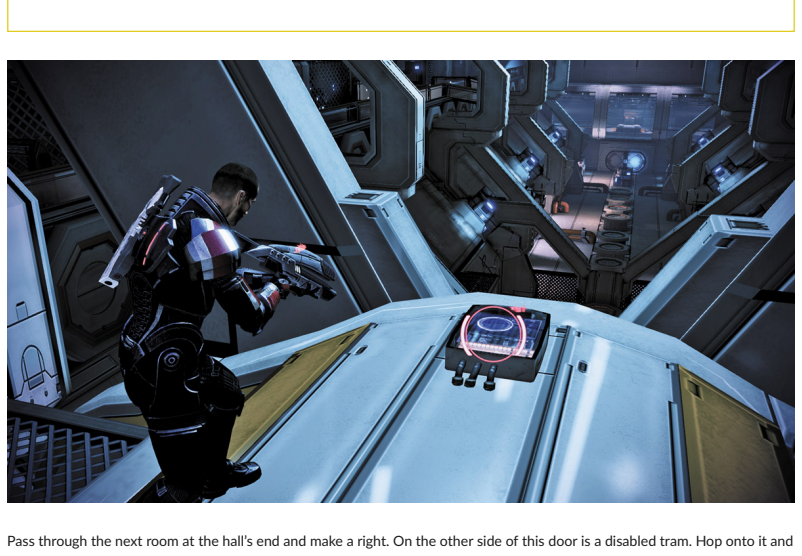
Snipers, assault rifles, and destructive powers like Cryo Blast or Incinerate will work wonders from this elevated position.

Just make sure you've got your flank covered, since clever Reapers like Ravagers or hungry Cannibals can still rush you from the center hall.

ITEM REQUISITION



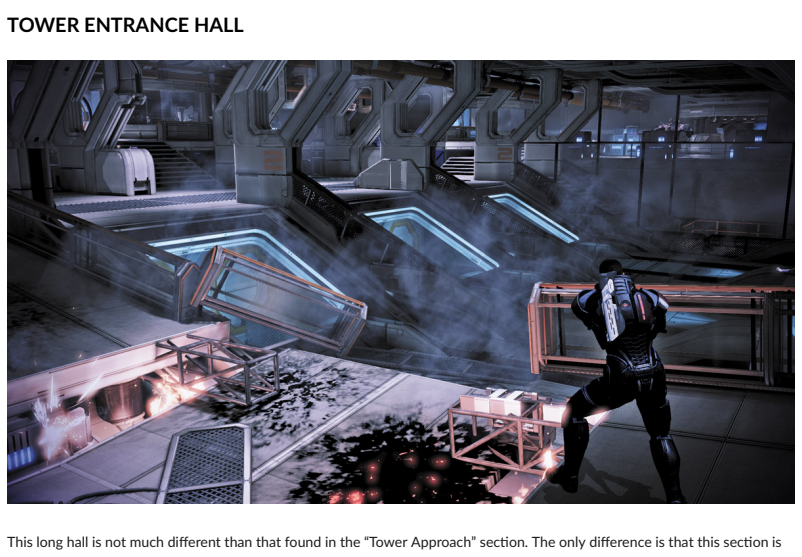
Enter the next lab and immediately turn right to find a **Medical Station** on the wall. Several of the testing pods in this area also have **Research Data** and **Logs** you can examine before hopping onto the disabled tram.



Pass through the next room at the hall's end and make a right. On the other side of this door is a disabled tram. Hop onto it and shoot open the small control console at the front of the tram. Activate it and the tram speeds toward the tower entrance.

Jump off the tram to the left when it stops and enter another long testing room. This hall leads to the tower entrance.

TOWER ENTRANCE HALL



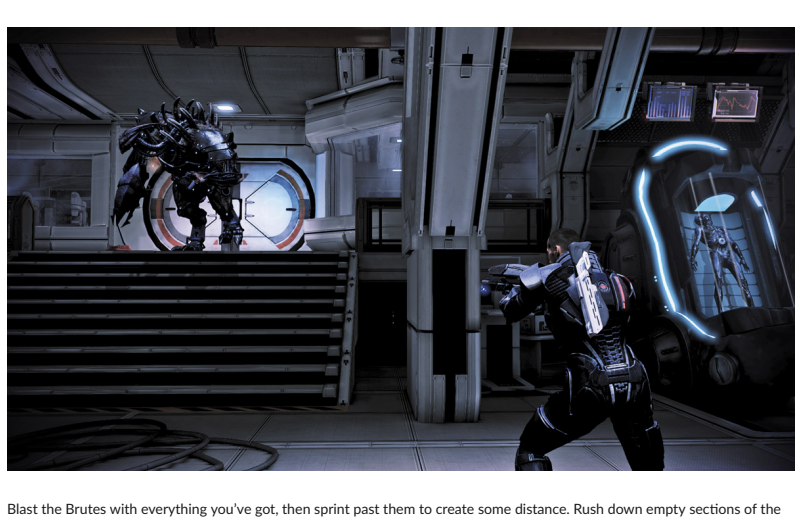
This long hall is not much different than that found in the "Tower Approach" section. The only difference is that this section is about half the length of the previous, and the lower right area is already partly demolished.

The main difference in this area are the enemies. Instead of Cannibals, Marauders, and Ravagers, you're tasked with clearing out Brutes and a Banshee before reaching the tower entrance.

APPROACH 1: BRING OUT THE BIG GUNS

Since you're facing several Brutes and a Banshee at once, your only chance to survive is to bring out all your big guns. Unleash everything from combat drones and decoys to Frag Grenades and Nova blasts to keep the Brutes busy.

Stay on the move as much as possible, and lead the Brutes away from the Banshee to create some breathing room. If you allow the Brutes and the Banshee to trap you, a single blast from the Banshee or a swipe from the Brutes will leave you defenseless. Once your shields are down, another attack can finish you off.



Blast the Brutes with everything you've got, then sprint past them to create some distance. Rush down empty sections of the hall, then turn around once you're far away and resume your attack. If necessary, assign your toughest squad member to engage the Banshee and keep her busy momentarily while you carefully wear down the Brutes.

Use every section of the hall. Sprint across the lower right hall, up across the center section, and attack from the top left. As you dash around the entire area, the Brutes will stay on the chase and slowly lose ground. Eventually, you can put down all of the Brutes, leaving only the Banshee to contend with.

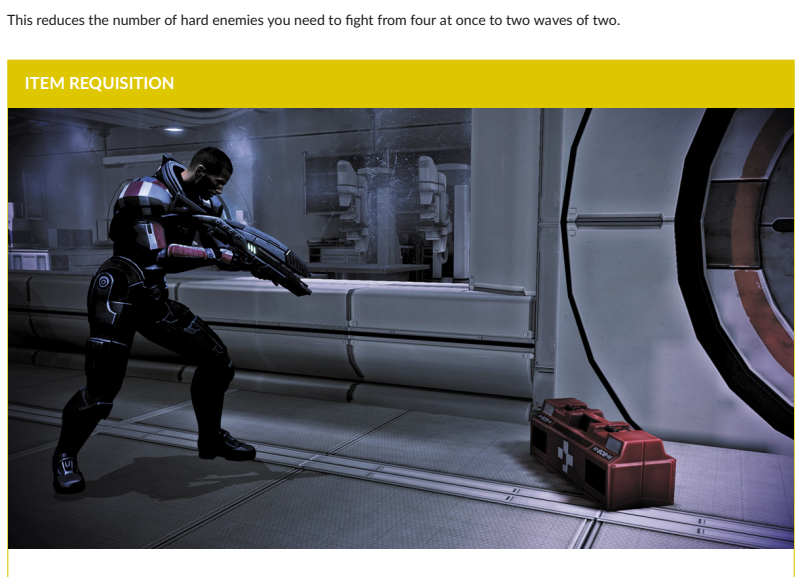
Split up your team and divide the Banshee's attention across both ends of the main hall. Rush back and forth, using the left and right sections, between the front and back ends of the main hall as you steadily inflict damage on the confused Banshee. Keep picking away at her until she falls.

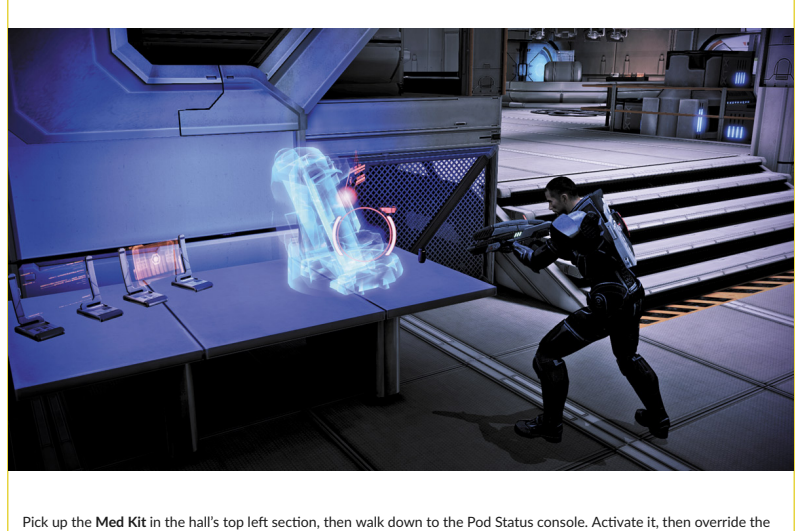
APPROACH 2: SPLIT UP THE ENEMIES

An alternate approach is to take down the initial two Brutes before proceeding too far into the combat. If you move too close to the preoccupied Brute and Banshee, they will turn their attention toward you instead.

This reduces the number of hard enemies you need to fight from four at once to two waves of two.

ITEM REQUISITION



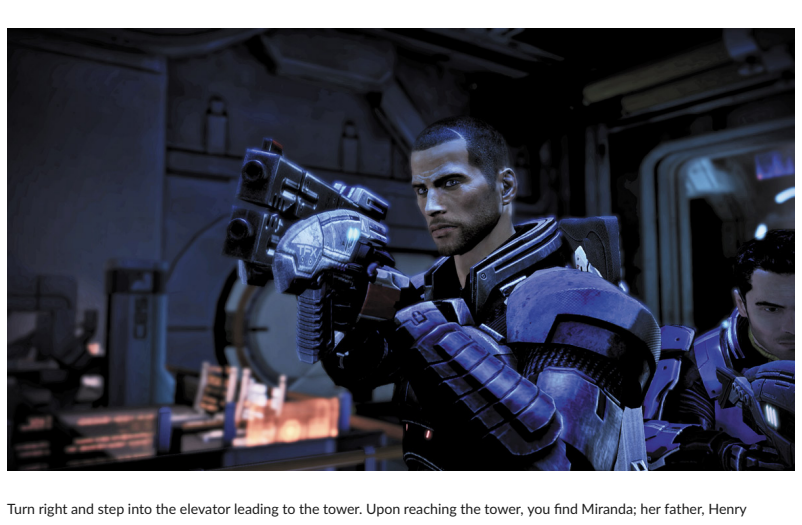


Pick up the **Med Kit** in the hall's top left section, then walk down to the Pod Status console. Activate it, then override the pods to unlock every pod in the center hall. Once they're all unlocked, rush back to the beginning of the main hall and examine the pod on the left.

Inside is the **M-99 Saber** assault rifle. The room at the hall's end, near the tower entrance, also has some **Research Data** you can salvage.

TIP

Even though it has a lower rate of fire, the Saber's damage rating is incredibly high. Treat this more like an assault-sniper rifle hybrid.



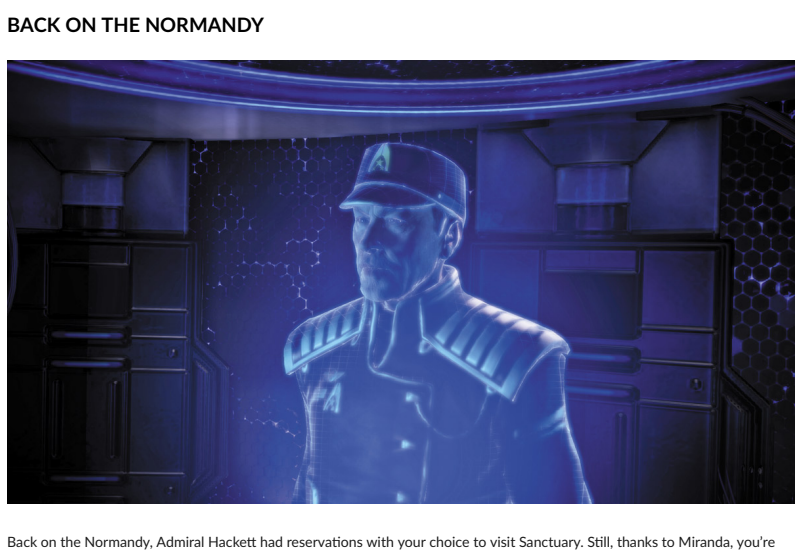
Turn right and step into the elevator leading to the tower. Upon reaching the tower, you find Miranda; her father, Henry Lawson; and her sister, Oriana. Henry is holding Oriana hostage, and it's up to you to either talk him down or put him down.

The ensuing conversation can yield Paragon or Renegade points. If you try to reason with him, you can gain Paragon points. Threaten him, and you gain Renegade points. Regardless of what Paragon/Renegade decision you make, Miranda ends the conversation on her own terms.

NOTE

If Miranda was killed in Mass Effect 2, the scene plays out between just Oriana and her father.

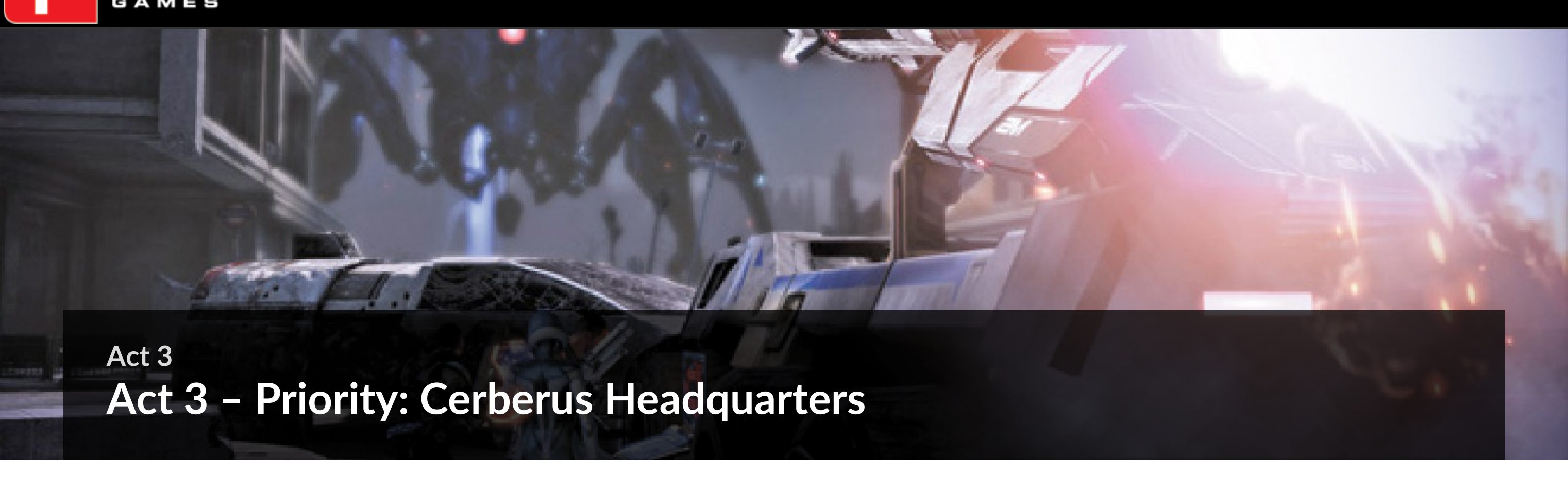
BACK ON THE NORMANDY



Back on the Normandy, Admiral Hackett had reservations with your choice to visit Sanctuary. Still, thanks to Miranda, you're now able to trace Kei Leng to the Illusive Man's base. It's time to take Cerberus out of the war.

NOTE

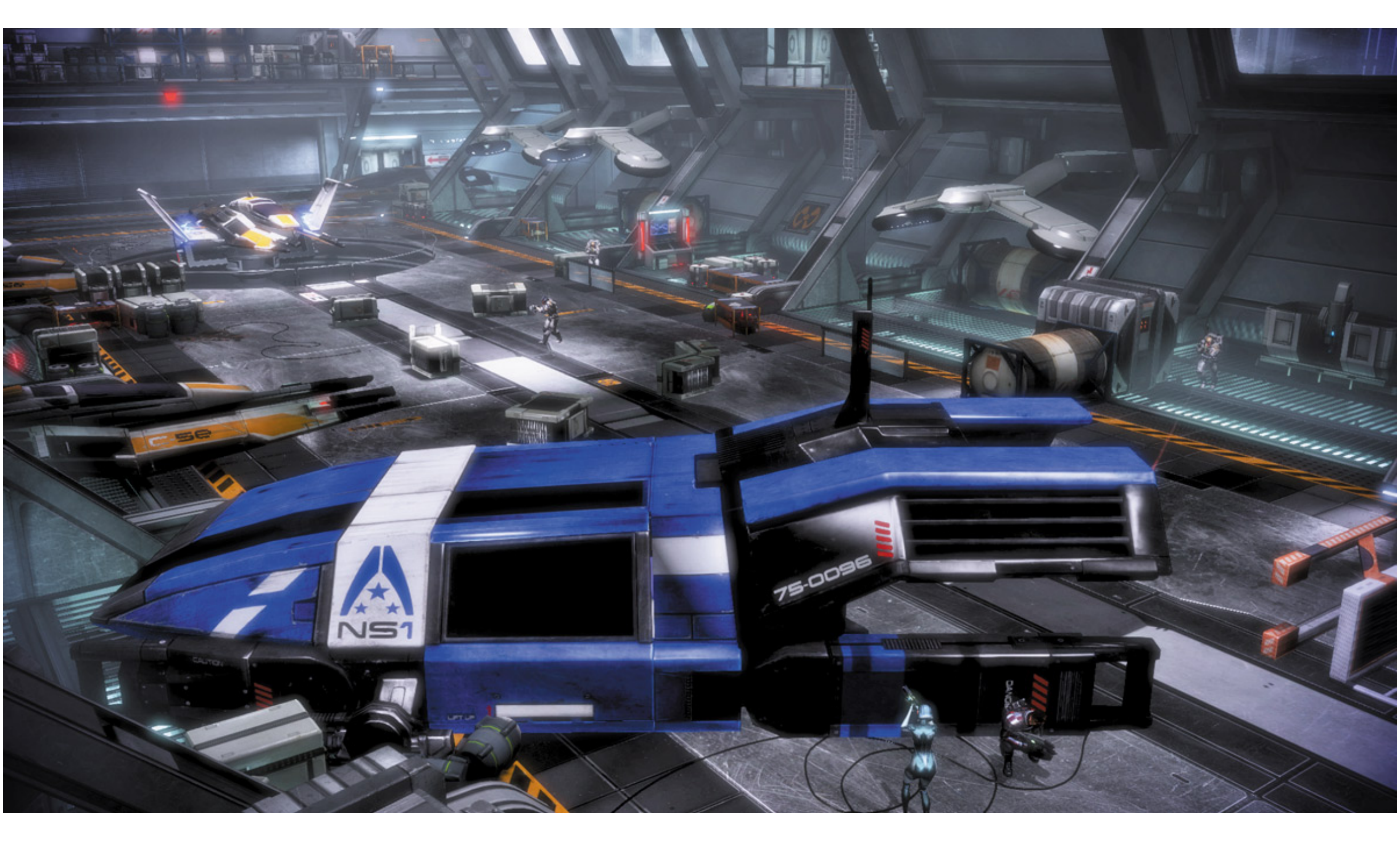
If Miranda didn't survive during Mass Effect 2, then you must rely on the shipping information uncovered in the father's office.



Act 3

Act 3 – Priority: Cerberus Headquarters

The Illusive Man's headquarters have been located, and the Alliance is prepared to attack to recover the Prothean VI that holds the key to the Catalyst. Once the attack is launched, the Alliance will be fully committed to the final fight against the Reapers. Assault the base when ready.



MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: The battlegrounds in this mission vary from wide-open areas with multiple lanes of attack to tightly cramped walkways forcing you to engage in head-on battle.

Players who feel comfortable with diversity in action will do very well during this mission.

The battle picks up quickly as you face multiple Atlas Mechs, Centurions, and Assault Troopers. Luckily, the hangar bay's a wide-open arena with plenty of cover lining the sides. Use flanking maneuvers or create a cross fire to catch enemies.

Vanguard players can use the wide-open area to rush to and fro as they demolish enemies using Biotic Charge.

Despite the seemingly labyrinthine corridors of the base's sublevels, you'll have plenty of room to maneuver and engage enemies from mid to close range. Turrets and force fields may make things difficult, but clever players with a wide array of destructive power combos will survive with ease.

About mid-mission, you will encounter a unique battle where you'll be forced to engage Phantoms, Assault Troopers, and Nemesis fighters in tightly cramped catwalks. With no choice but to move forward, aggressive players will cut a swath across the walkways, stopping only to look back in the event that you're being flanked.

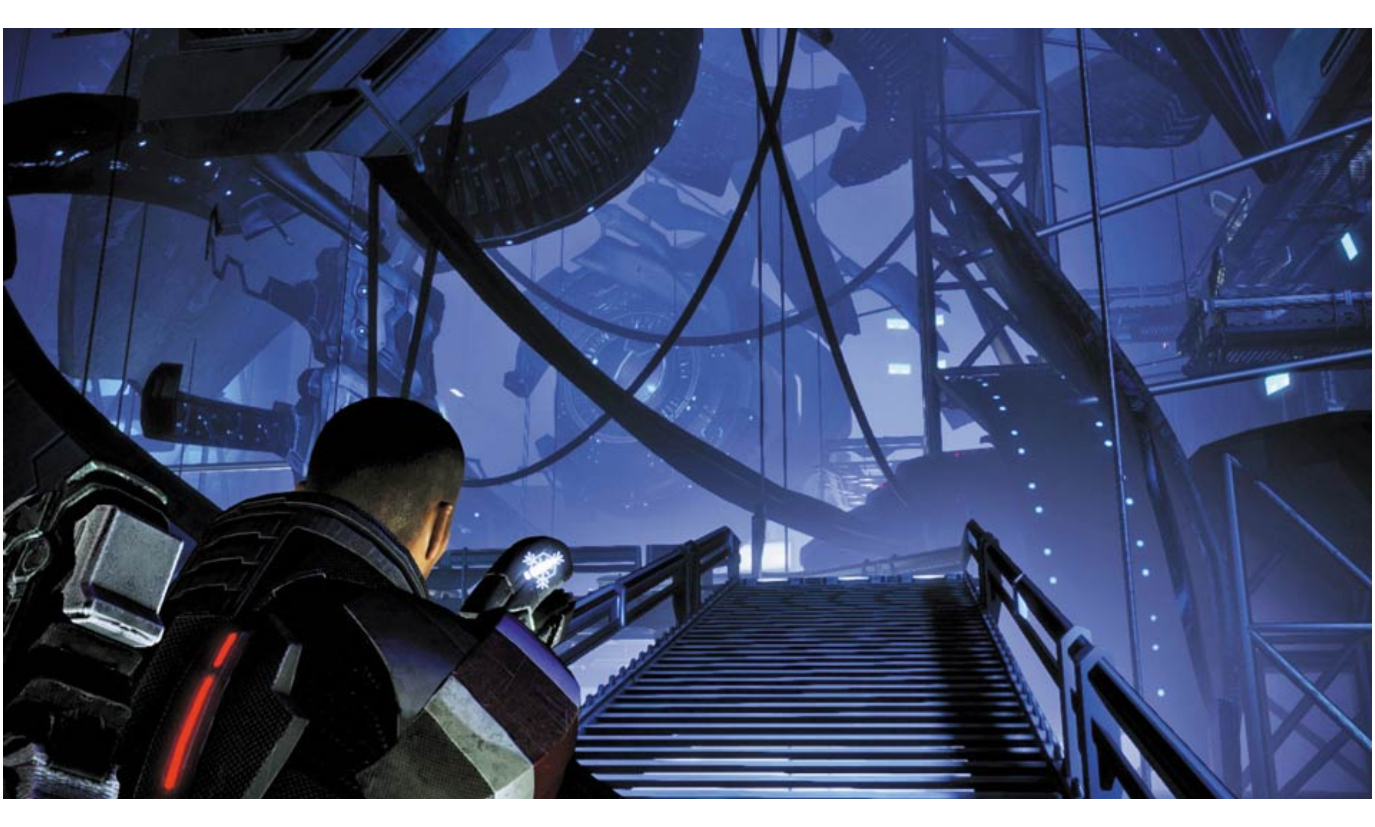
Consequence Overview: Pre-mission, there aren't many options to gain Paragon/Renegade points. As the mission concludes, however, you'll speak with the Illusive Man and have the option to gain a few Paragon/Renegade points as well as use a Paragon/Renegade persuasion. If you've managed to persuade the Illusive Man across all other conversation, do so now to maintain your momentum.

Paragon/Renegade

At the end of the mission, you'll also speak with the Prothean VI one last time. During this conversation, you'll get a chance to use a Paragon/Renegade interrupt. The Renegade interrupt will happen first, so don't use it if you want to use the Paragon interrupt.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Demulcore Overlay	Med Kit
M-37 Falcon	PDA
Medical Station	Serrice Council Greaves
Medi-Gel	Terminal



WAR ASSETS

ASSET	BECOMES AVAILABLE	CONDITION NEEDED
Alliance Sixth Fleet	Act 3—Priority: Cerberus Headquarters	None. Automatically unlocks
Reaper Brain	Act 3—Priority: Cerberus Headquarters	Import Mass Effect 2 save where the base kept
Reaper Heart	Act 3—Priority: Cerberus Headquarters	Import Mass Effect 2 save where the base was destroyed
Miranda Lawson	Act 3—Priority: Cerberus Headquarters	Miranda survives Act 3—Priority: Horizon

AROUND THE GALAXY

Mission Unlocks

None

Mission Locks

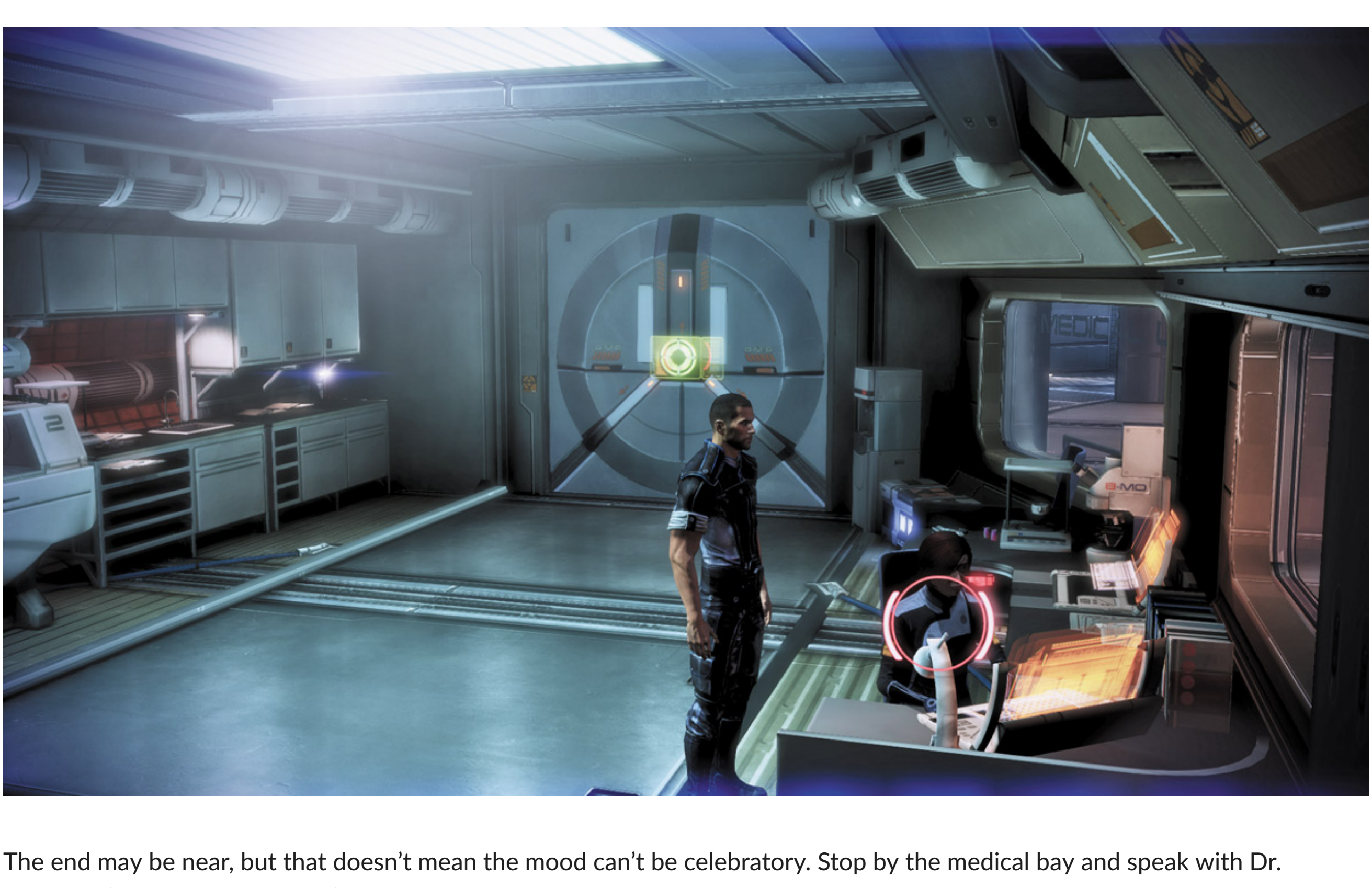
All remaining missions close as soon as you launch the assault on the Illusive Man's base.

WAR PREPARATIONS

There's nothing left to do but move forward with your assault. As Admiral Hackett explains, launching the assault on the Illusive Man's base is an "all-in" situation. You've reached the point of no return.

If you'd like to get straight to the next mission, skip to the "Assault the Illusive Man's Base" section later in this guide.

SPEAK WITH DR. CHAKWAS

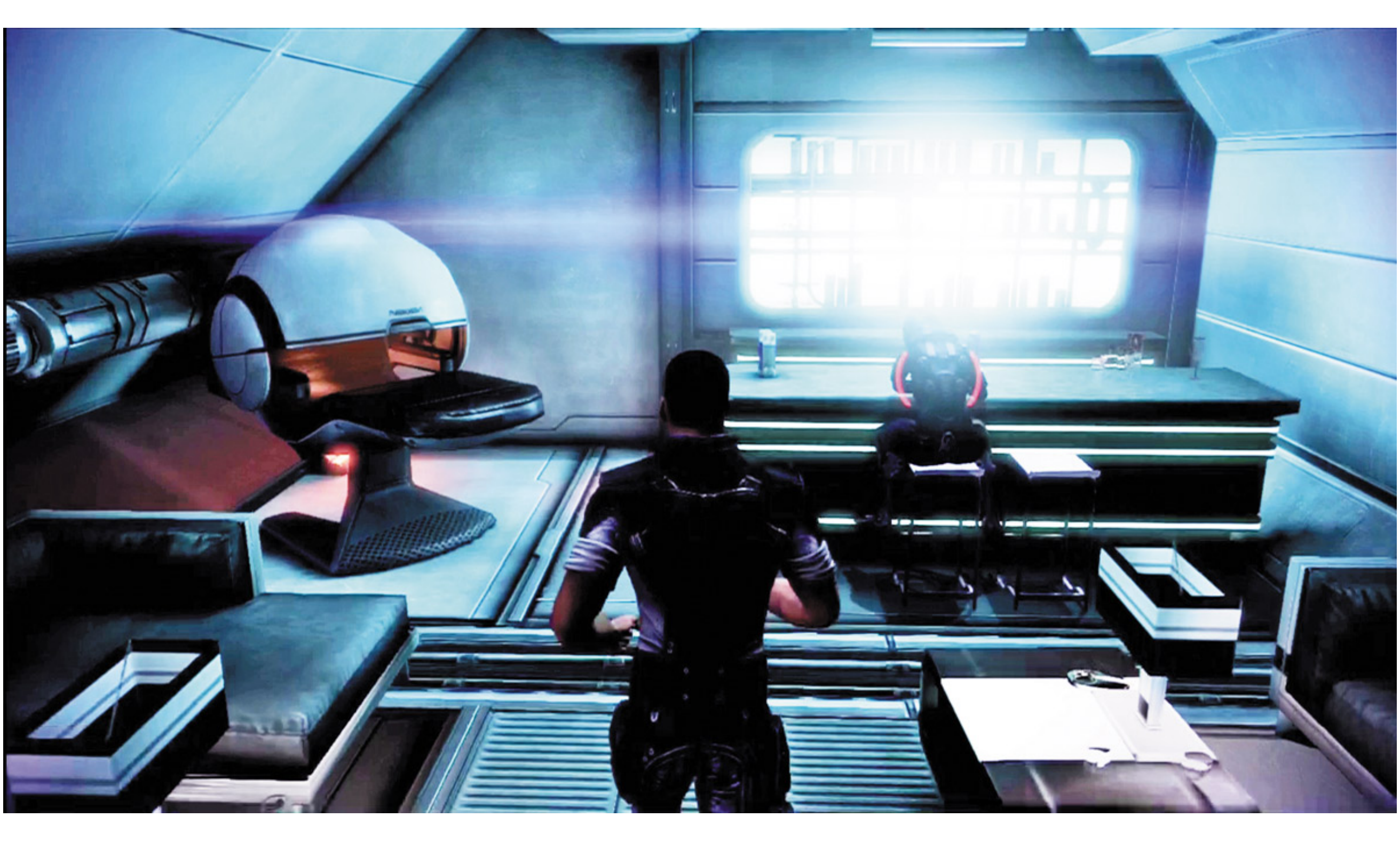


The end may be near, but that doesn't mean the mood can't be celebratory. Stop by the medical bay and speak with Dr. Chakwas (if she's on your crew). She'll suggest having a bottle of wine before the next mission. If you choose to do so, you can earn some Reputation points.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

This interaction mirrors another possible interaction you may have had with Dr. Chakwas during *Mass Effect 2* .

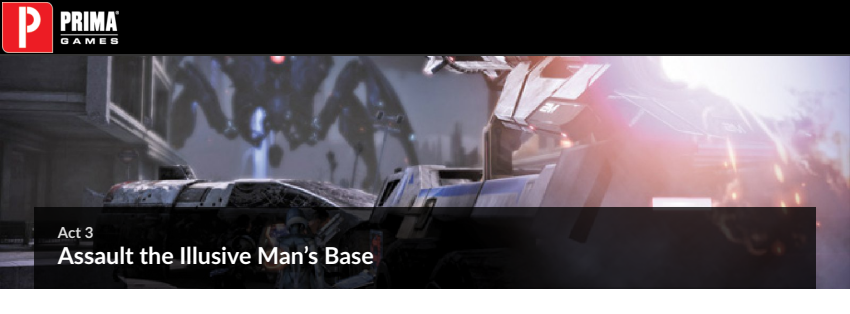
SPEAK WITH TALI



Tali isn't feeling too hot after the events on Sanctuary. Visit her on the port observation deck as she sits alone at the lounge. Speak with her.

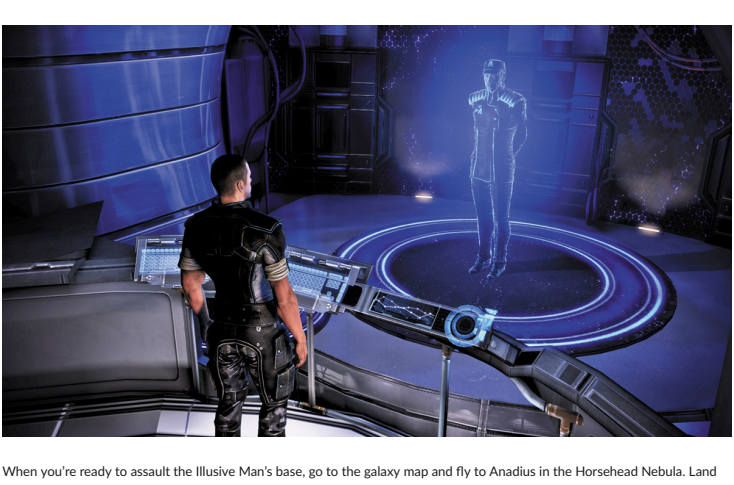
Upgrade Weapons and Reassign Powers

This is it, your last chance to purchase weapon and mod upgrades, or reassign powers. If you have any powers with points in them that you don't use, spend a few credits to reassign all of your points and maximize their value.



Act 3

Assault the Illusive Man's Base



When you're ready to assault the Illusive Man's base, go to the galaxy map and fly to Anadius in the Horsehead Nebula. Land on Cronos Station to get a priority communication from Admiral Hackett.

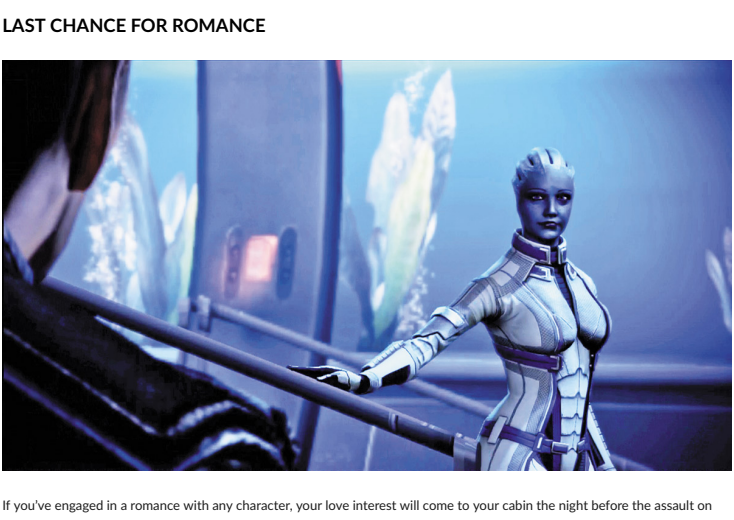
He warns you that as soon as you launch the assault, there will be no hiding the Crucible from the Reapers, so you'll be going "all in."

If your mission on Cronos Station fails, then your only course is to launch an all-out assault on Earth and hope for the best.

TIP

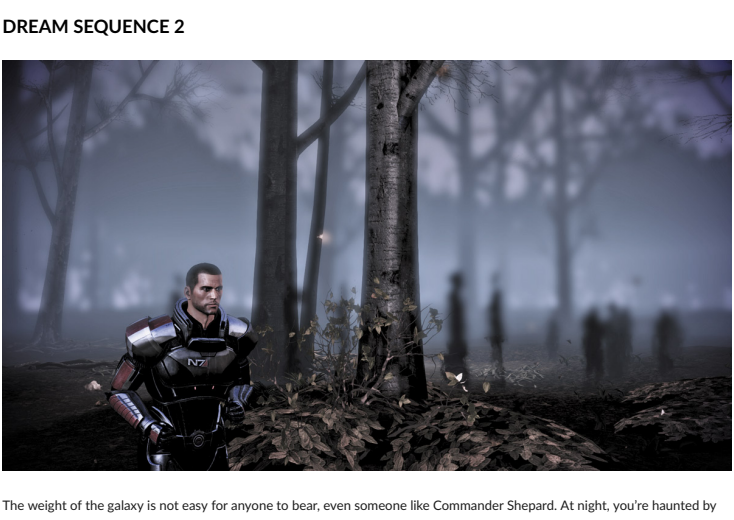
As soon as you select "We go now!" during the conversation with Admiral Hackett, all bets are off and there's no turning back. Be sure that you've completed every mission you want to complete, purchased any weapon or mod upgrades, reassigned powers, or equipped specific armor before selecting this dialogue option.

LAST CHANCE FOR ROMANCE



If you've engaged in a romance with any character, your love interest will come to your cabin the night before the assault on the Illusive Man's base and offer to spend the night. You can turn down the offer if you'd like, without the risk of losing the relationship, but you will lose the chance opportunity for one last chat the following morning.

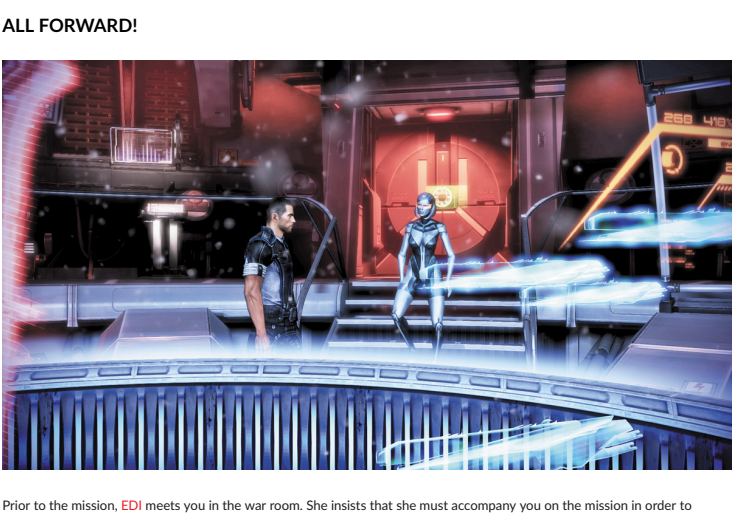
DREAM SEQUENCE 2



The weight of the galaxy is not easy for anyone to bear, even someone like Commander Shepard. At night, you're haunted by another dream, this one more violent than the first two.

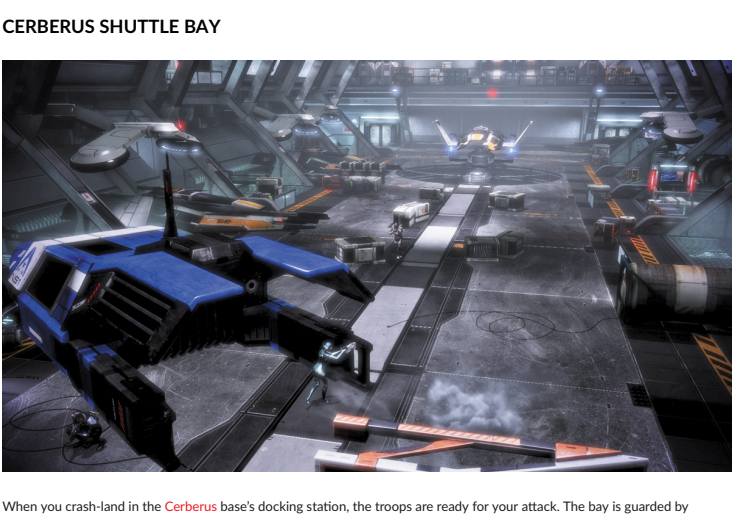
Once again, you have control of this dream sequence, but you don't have to do much. Simply follow the child as he runs from place to place until the dream ends. If you've engaged in a romance with someone and asked them to stay the night, then speak with your lover one more time before setting out on the mission.

ALL FORWARD!



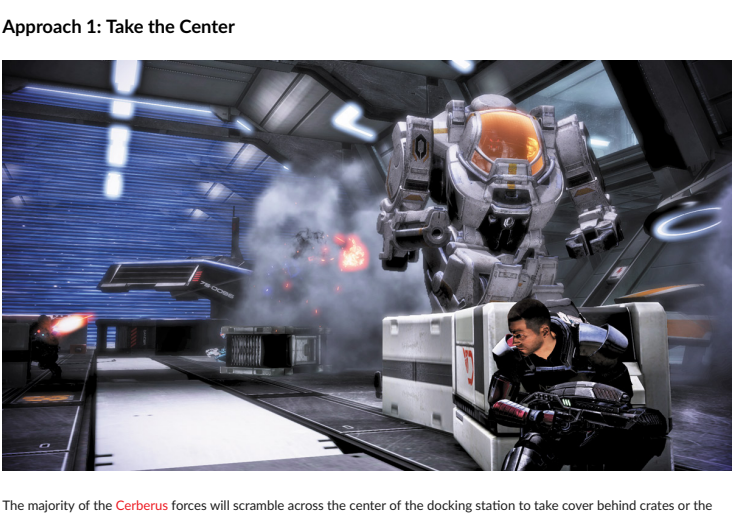
Prior to the mission, EDI meets you in the war room. She insists that she must accompany you on the mission in order to increase your chances of success. Given her history with Cerberus, she's right. No other person on your crew has the wealth of information on Cerberus as she does. She's also well equipped to hack any security systems that may be in place.

CERBERUS SHUTTLE BAY



When you crash-land in the Cerberus base's docking station, the troops are ready for your attack. The bay is guarded by Cerberus soldiers of nearly every type. The docking station is wide, with alleys along the left and right side where you can take cover behind partitions. The center has a large, circular ship-launching platform and several small crates surrounding it.

Approach 1: Take the Center



The majority of the Cerberus forces will scramble across the center of the docking station to take cover behind crates or the nearby alleys on either side. As they do, unleash your combined powers to slow them down, and follow up with weapons fire.

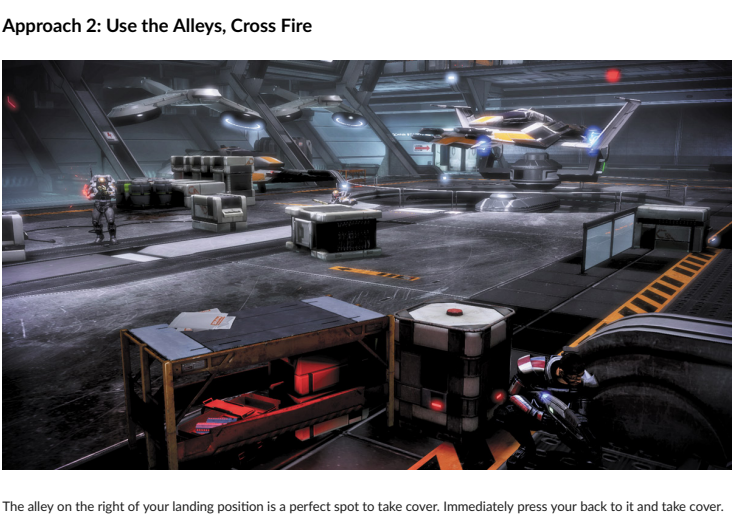
Take down as many Assault Troopers and Centurions as you can before the Atlas comes stomping toward you.

When it does, turn your squad's full attention on it. Split up your team members across the length of the station to confuse the Atlas and split its fire. Keep your squad members on the move by ordering them to a different spot when the Atlas approaches them.

As it targets one of your squad members, it'll frequently shift its position and expose itself to attack.

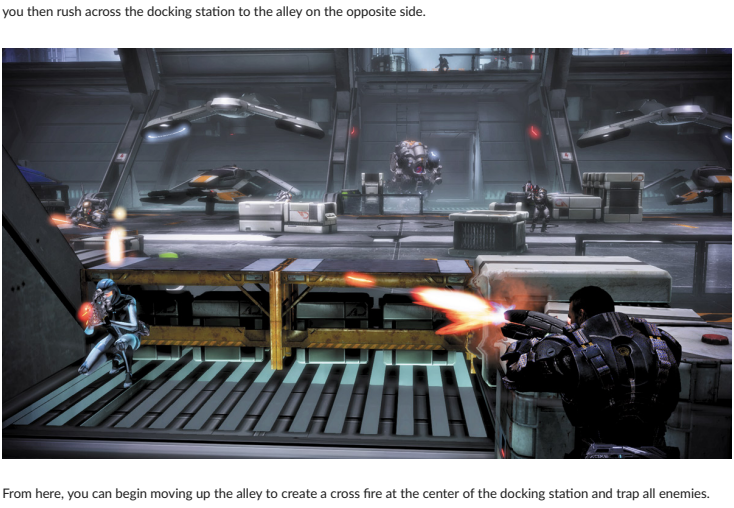
Keep behind cover as much as possible—there may still be a few troopers running around—and focus your attacks on the Atlas.

Approach 2: Use the Alleys, Cross Fire



The alley on the right of your landing position is a perfect spot to take cover. Immediately press your back to it and take cover. If any Cerberus troopers are foolish enough to approach you, use a covert takedown to eliminate him quickly.

Carefully blast a path down the right alley, using the partitions as cover as you go. Order your squad into the right alley, while you then rush across the docking station to the alley on the opposite side.



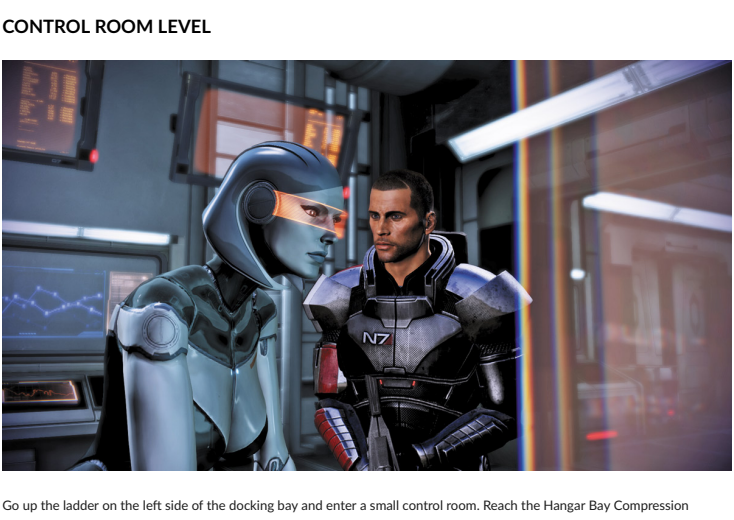
From here, you can begin moving up the alley to create a cross fire at the center of the docking station and trap all enemies. Trap the Atlas in your cross fire and force it to keep guessing as you move yourself and your squad up and down the alleys for cover.

TIP

The launching fighter removes shields when it flies overhead. You can use this to your advantage when fighting shielded enemies, but be careful, because it will remove your shields too.

No matter which option you take, when all Cerberus enemies are dead, Cerberus will attempt to vent the hangar. You have a limited amount of time to reach a control console and stop them from doing so.

CONTROL ROOM LEVEL

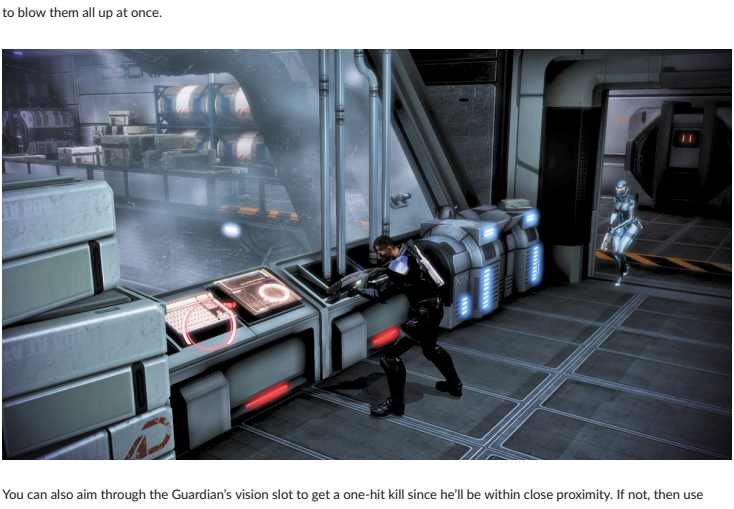


Go up the ladder on the left side of the docking bay and enter a small control room. Reach the Hangar Bay Compression Controls console and allow EDI to stop Cerberus from decompressing the hangar bay and blowing you out into space.

Despite EDI's success in overriding their commands, she's unable to open the hangar door into the main station. You'll have to blast your way in.

When Cerberus realizes you've stopped their venting attempt, they send in reinforcements. Take cover near the door behind you and wait for the Guardians and Assault Troopers to come rushing in.

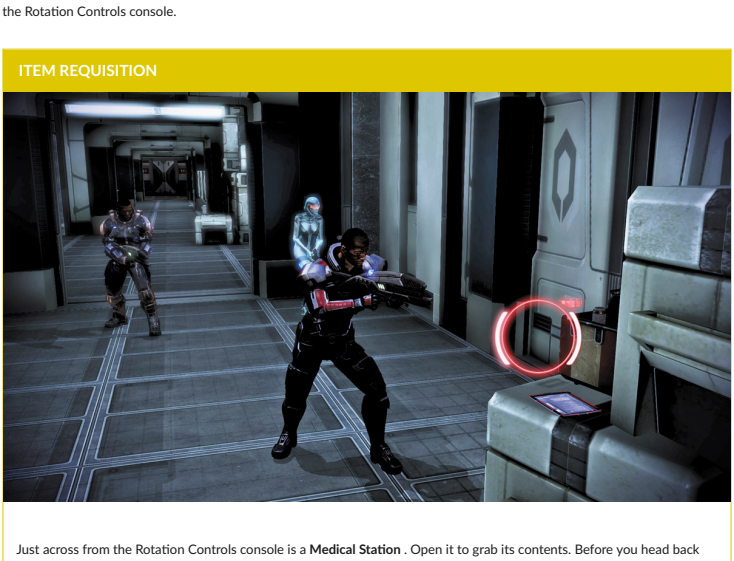
The area around them is tight and cramped, so either use explosive power combinations or toss a few grenades down the hall to blow them all up at once.



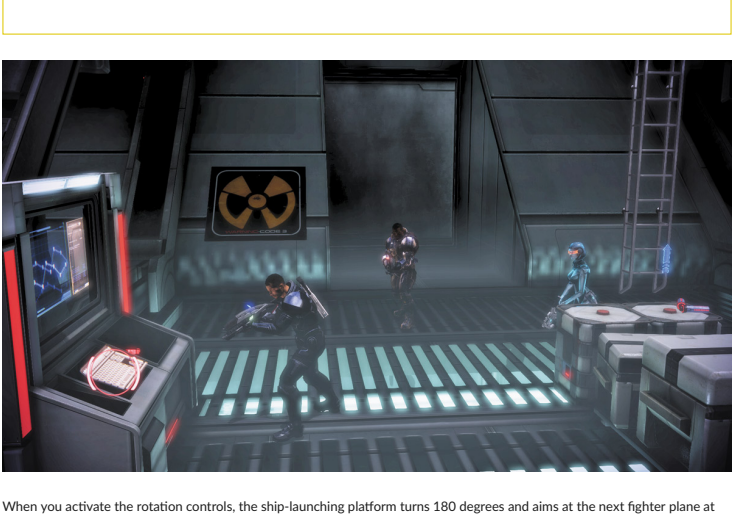
You can also aim through the Guardian's vision slot to get a one-hit kill since he'll be within close proximity. If not, then use powers like Pull to yank its shield away, or use Singularity, Throw, Shockwave, or Lift Grenade to hurl the enemies up and away.

Go down the hall and turn right into the next section. Here, another team of Cerberus goons attacks. This team is comprised of Centurions and a Nemesis. Similar tactics should do the trick here as well. Finally, make a right at the end of this section to find the Rotation Controls console.

ITEM REQUISITION



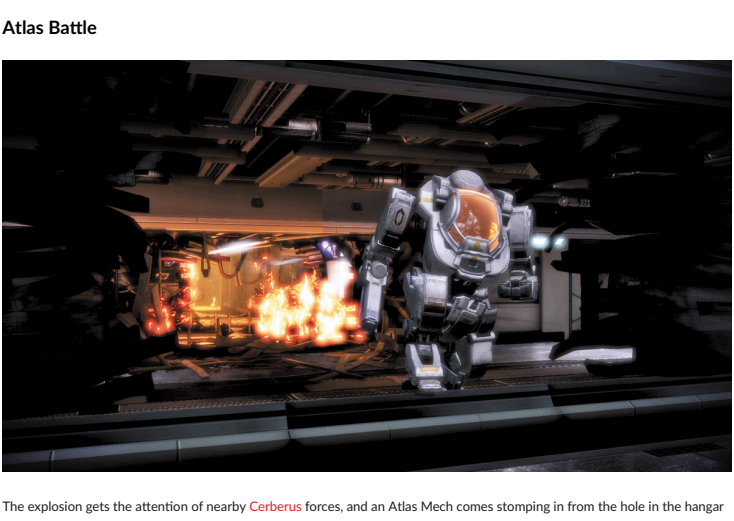
Just across from the Rotation Controls console is a **Medical Station** . Open it to grab its contents. Before you head back down to the lower hangar area, go through the doors just left of the ladder leading down. Inside, you'll find a **PDA** worth a few credits.



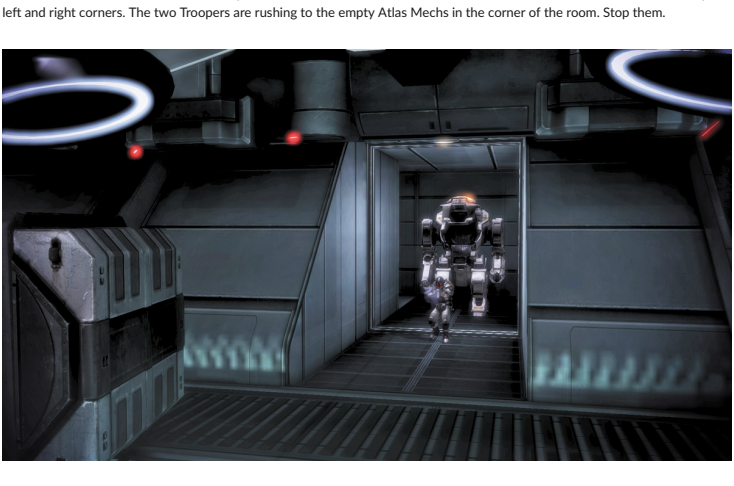
When you activate the rotation controls, the ship-launching platform turns 180 degrees and aims at the next fighter plane at the hangar doors. When the ship launches, it'll slam into the doors and breach them.

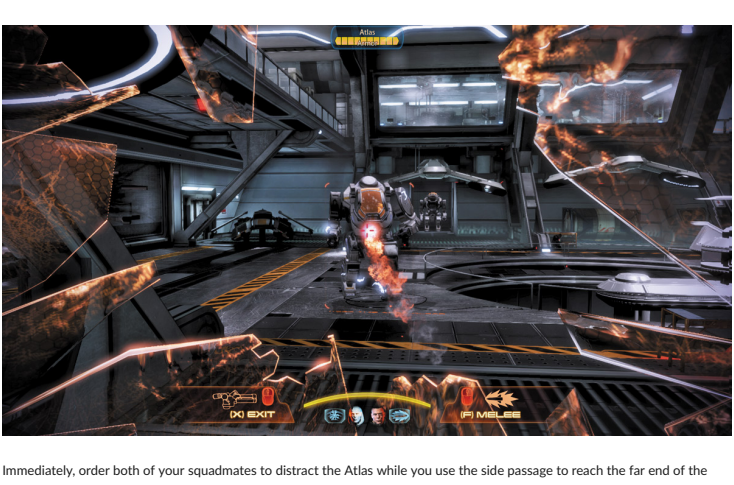
Make a left and go through the next set of doors. They open to a ladder leading back down to the lower hangar level. Go down and hit the Clamp Release button at the base of the ladder to launch the fighter plane through the hangar doors and into the main facility.

Atlas Battle



The explosion gets the attention of nearby Cerberus forces, and an Atlas Mech comes stomping in from the hole in the hangar door. At the same time, two Assault Troopers rush down the ladders from the levels above and make a mad dash to the bay's left and right corners. The two Troopers are rushing to the empty Atlas Mechs in the corner of the room. Stop them.

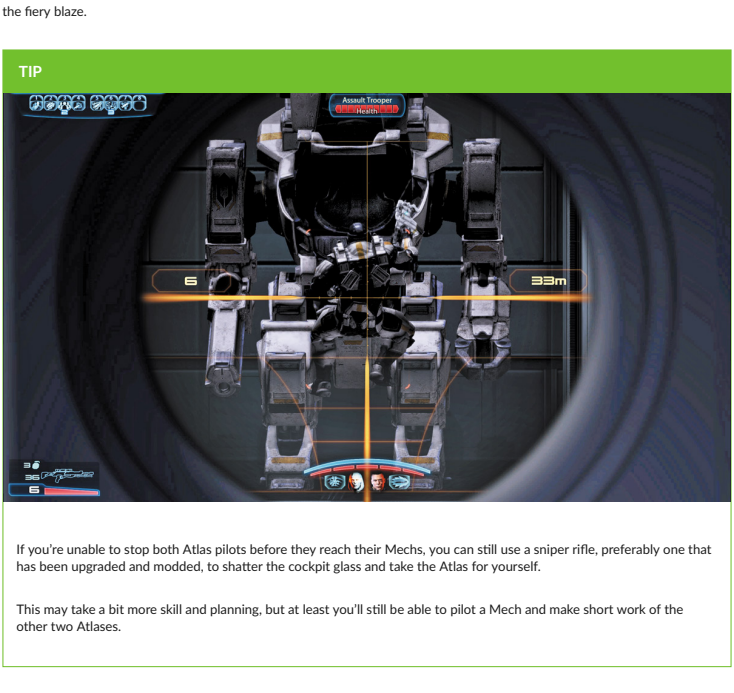




Immediately, order both of your squadmates to distract the Atlas while you use the side passage to reach the far end of the hangar bay. When you do, quickly overwhelm the Assault Troopers before they can get inside. Use power combos to blow them up, or use single power attacks like Stasis (or even Adrenaline Rush) to slow down the action.

Once they're out of the way, get inside one of the mechs and turn its awesome weaponry on the Atlas attacking your team. A few well-placed missile shots should do the trick. Once the hangar bay is clear, go through the hole in the hangar doors toward the fiery blaze.

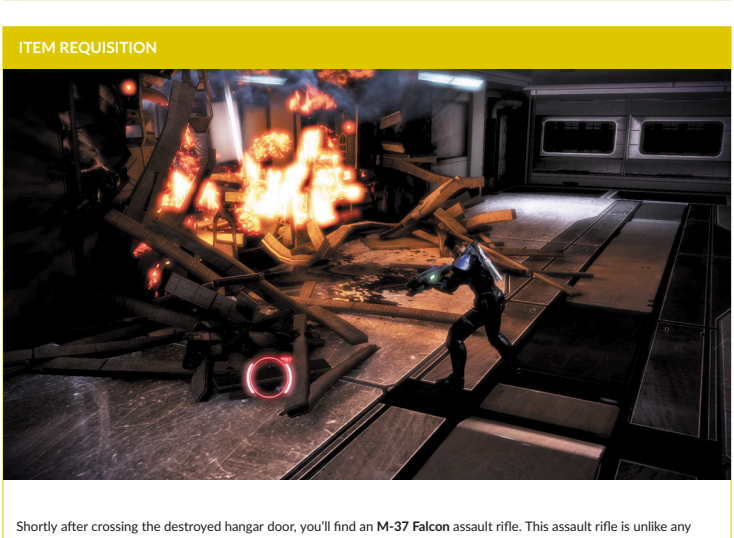
TIP



If you're unable to stop both Atlas pilots before they reach their Mechs, you can still use a sniper rifle, preferably one that has been upgraded and modded, to shatter the cockpit glass and take the Atlas for yourself.

This may take a bit more skill and planning, but at least you'll still be able to pilot a Mech and make short work of the other two Atlases.

ITEM REQUISITION



Shortly after crossing the destroyed hangar door, you'll find an **M-37 Falcon** assault rifle. This assault rifle is unlike any other weapon you have. It fires heavy projectiles and has a decent rate of fire, and the projectiles explode on contact increasing damage.

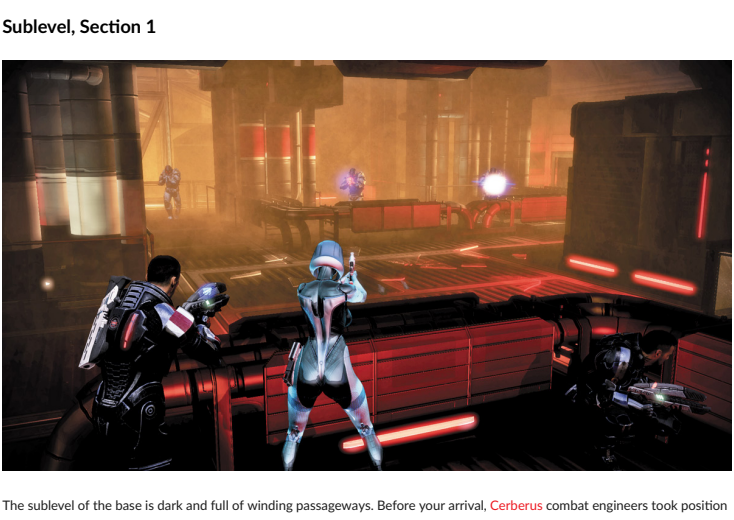
In some cases, if they don't hit their target directly, they can ricochet off walls before detonating.

Order EDI to open the door on the left. As she does, she taps into the facility's communications system and is able to spy on Cerberus's movements about the base. She alerts you that Cerberus has redoubled its efforts to stop you, but with her on your side, they can only slow you down. Go down the hatch when you're ready to proceed to the central lab.

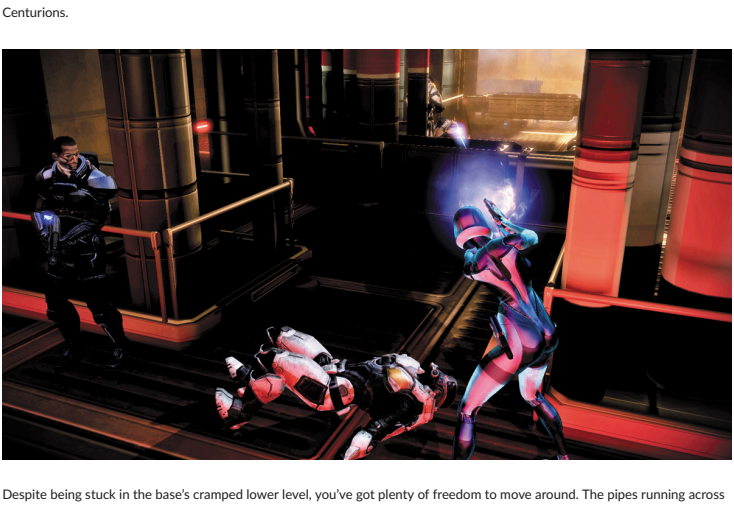
TIP

This interaction with EDI grants you an opportunity to either thank her for her efforts or keep her focused on the task at hand.

Sublevel, Section 1



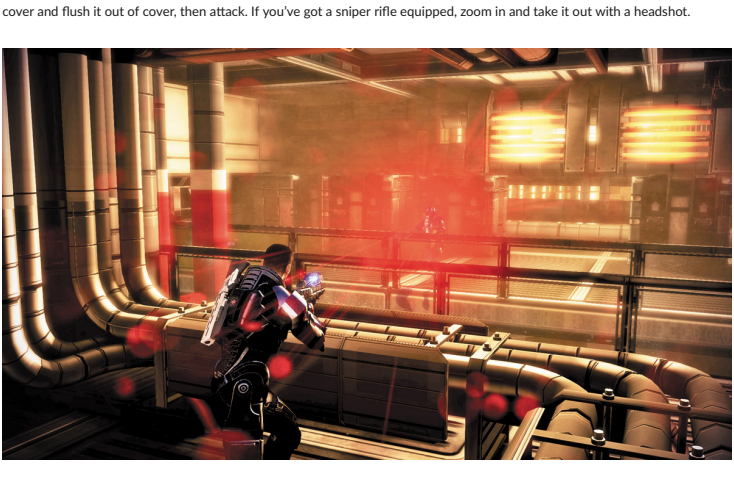
The sublevel of the base is dark and full of winding passageways. Before your arrival, Cerberus combat engineers took position inside and started getting into place, setting up turrets along the way. They're accompanied by Assault Troopers and Centurions.



Despite being stuck in the base's cramped lower level, you've got plenty of freedom to move around. The pipes running across the floor and the tanks lined in short rows allow for a wide enough path full of cover from which to safely attack and defend.

Take cover behind the pipes and follow them across the room, sidestepping the Cerberus troops.

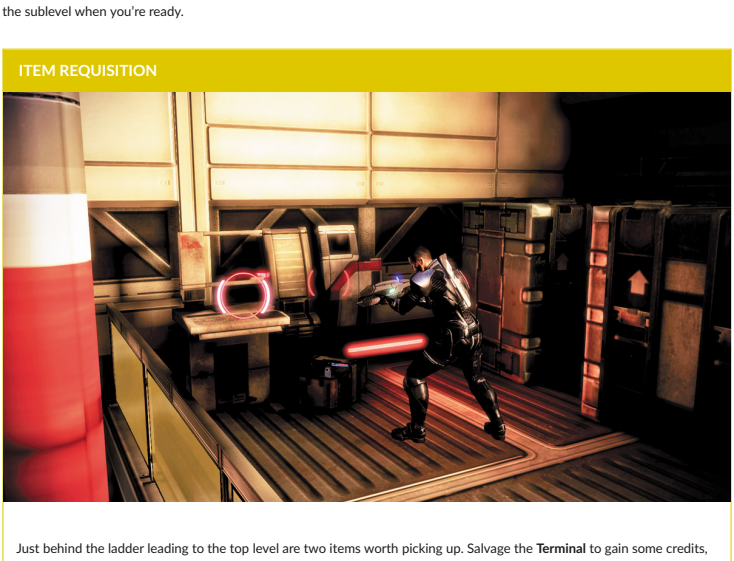
Maneuver your group across the room, attacking as you go, until you spy the Nemesis at the level's far end. When you do, take cover and flush it out of cover, then attack. If you've got a sniper rifle equipped, zoom in and take it out with a headshot.



After you deal with the Nemesis, press deeper into the room and keep the pressure on the remaining Assault Troopers. Take cover near the L-shaped pipes that come down from the ceiling and flush out all remaining foes on this level.

Order your squad to take cover with you in this L-shaped cover; you'll have a great place to fend off foes. Move from one side of the L-shaped pipes to the other, clearing out enemies as you go until the room is empty. Go up the ladder at the far end of the sublevel when you're ready.

ITEM REQUISITION



Just behind the ladder leading to the top level are two items worth picking up. Salvage the **Terminal** to gain some credits, then open the **Medical Station** to acquire its contents.

After climbing the ladder, stop by the computer console near the next doorway while EDI opens it. The console has three entries, all about Project Lazarus. You can check out all three or none if you choose.

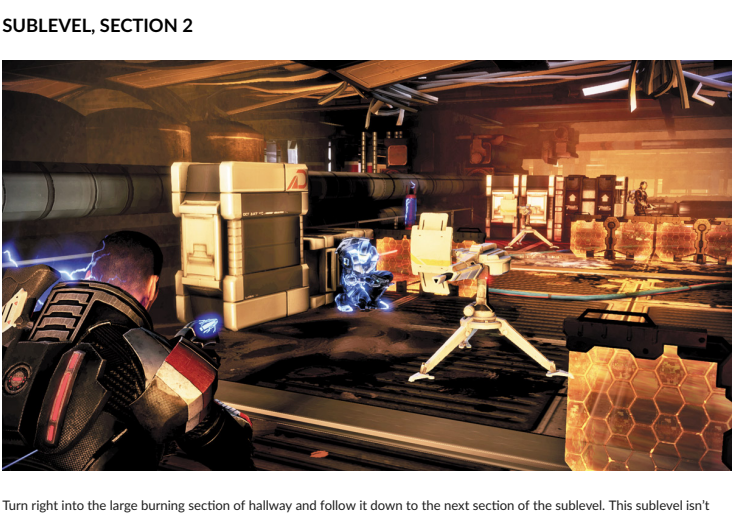
When you're done with the console, EDI will open the door and allow you access to the next area.

The trip to the top level doesn't last long, as the next section has a massive hole in the floor. You'll have to go back down to the sublevel for this next section.

ITEM REQUISITION

After EDI grants you access to the next area, look around for the **Serrice Council Greaves** . Pick them up and keep moving.

SUBLEVEL, SECTION 2



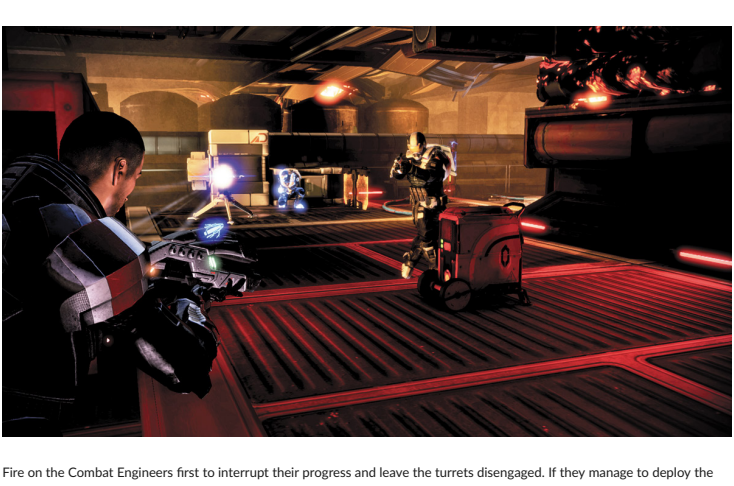
Turn right into the large burning section of hallway and follow it down to the next section of the sublevel. This sublevel isn't lower than before; it's just another section of it. When you set foot into this section, the Assault Troopers waste no time opening fire.

They're the first line of offense as the Combat Engineers set up their turrets. Send your squad ahead and mow down the Assault Troopers on your way to the Combat Engineers. If you get past the first line quickly, you can reach the Combat Engineers before they're able to fully deploy their turrets.

TIP

Vanguard players can clear this area extremely quickly using Biotic Charge and Nova combos. Simply charge from Combat Engineer to Combat Engineer, penetrating deeper into the level and interrupting their progress as you go. If the initial charge doesn't destroy them, follow up with Nova to finish them off.

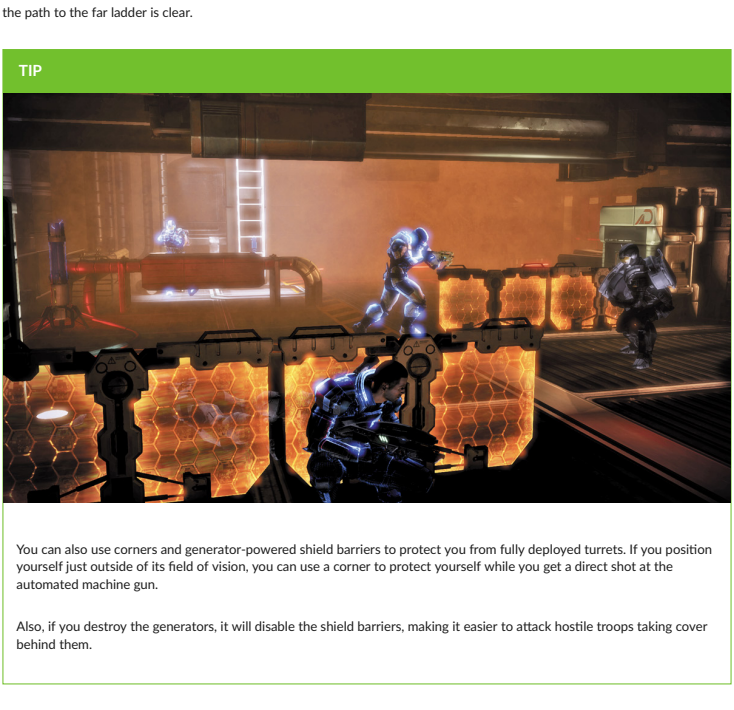
Nova will also have the added bonus of knocking away other nearby enemies. If you begin to lose shields, simply use Biotic Charge again to replenish them.



Fire on the Combat Engineers first to interrupt their progress and leave the turrets disengaged. If they manage to deploy the turret in time, hurl a grenade or use explosive power combos to blow them up. EDI's Decoy ability can also help distract deployed turrets in this lower area.

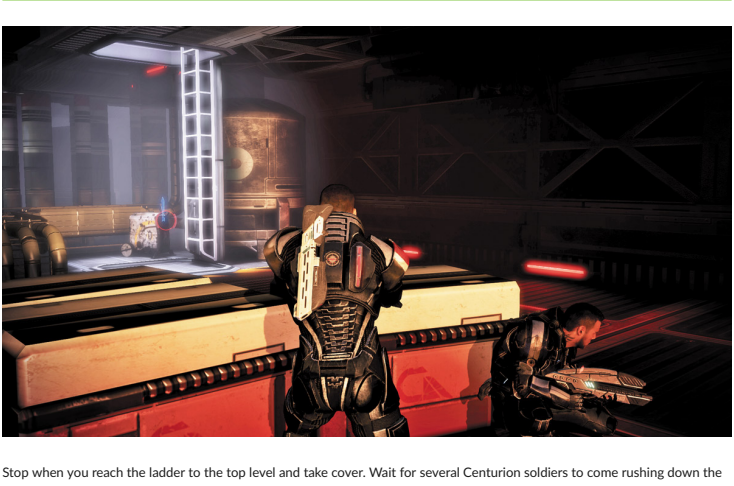
Make a left and spot the next Combat Engineer. If they're standing next to a shield pylon, destroy the pylon first (they work like barrier engines), then focus your fire on the nearby enemies. Continue carefully picking off turrets and Combat Engineers until the path to the far ladder is clear.

TIP

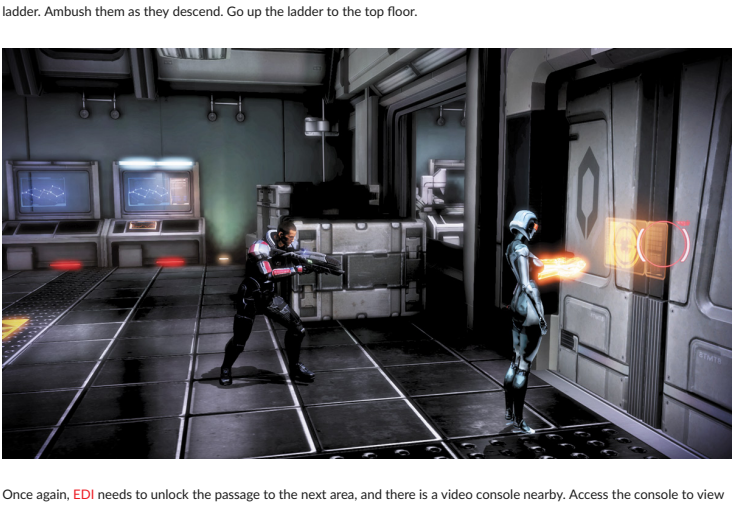


You can also use corners and generator-powered shield barriers to protect you from fully deployed turrets. If you position yourself just outside of its field of vision, you can use a corner to protect yourself while you get a direct shot at the automated machine gun.

Also, if you destroy the generators, it will disable the shield barriers, making it easier to attack hostile troops taking cover behind them.



Stop when you reach the ladder to the top level and take cover. Wait for several Centurion soldiers to come rushing down the ladder. Ambush them as they descend. Go up the ladder to the top floor.



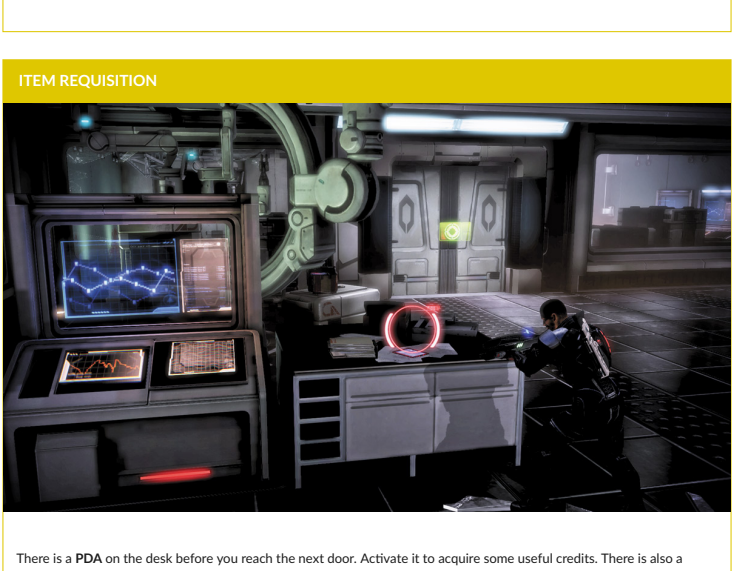
Once again, EDI needs to unlock the passage to the next area, and there is a video console nearby. Access the console to view up to three videos. This time, the videos are not about you or the Lazarus Project, but rather about EDI and Dr. Eva.

You don't have to watch the videos, but if you do, you may gain a new appreciation for your synthetic ally. When you finish with the video console, EDI is done opening the passage to the next area.

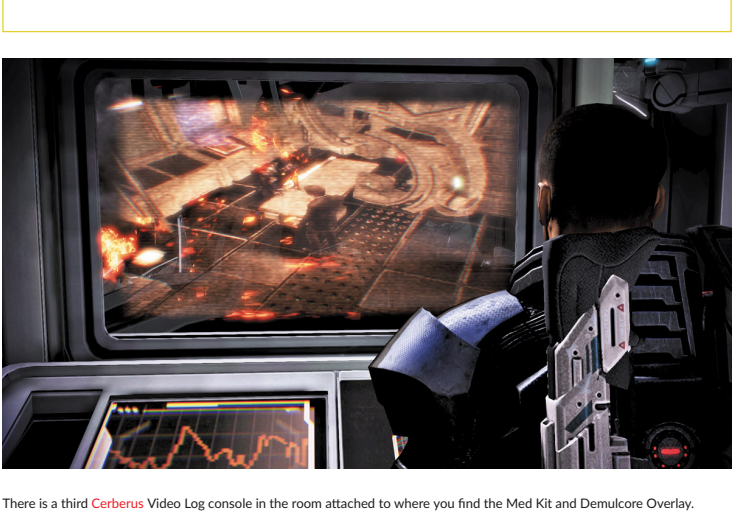
PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

If you saved Jack in *Mass Effect 2* but missed the Grissom Academy mission, you will find an additional PDA in the room with EDI's information log. The audio log will tell you Jack's fate if you did not help her out at Grissom Academy.

ITEM REQUISITION



There is a **PDA** on the desk before you reach the next door. Activate it to acquire some useful credits. There is also a **Medical Station** in this room on the left-hand wall. Exit through the door and turn right. All the way across the hall is another door on the right. Go through to find a **Med Kit** and the **Demulcore Overlay** in a demolished room.



There is a third Cerberus Video Log console in the room attached to where you find the Med Kit and Demulcore Overlay. Access it and you'll see video footage of the Illusive Man and, Kai Leng. Kai isn't happy with the events on Thessia; he's still itching for a fight

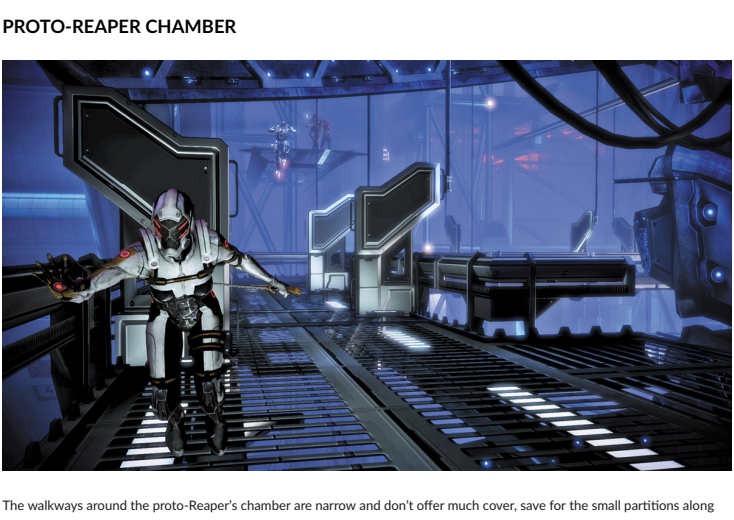
Back out in the main hall, you'll find a blue-lit shaft leading down to the lower level again. Drop down to find a series of walkways leading up and out, past a large proto-Reaper dangling from the facility's roof. It's currently powering the facility and poses no threat.

The conversation between you and your squadmates may help shed some light on the Illusive Man's current motivations. If you've brought Liara, she may even give you perspective from one that has lived in the shadows, just as the Illusive Man does.

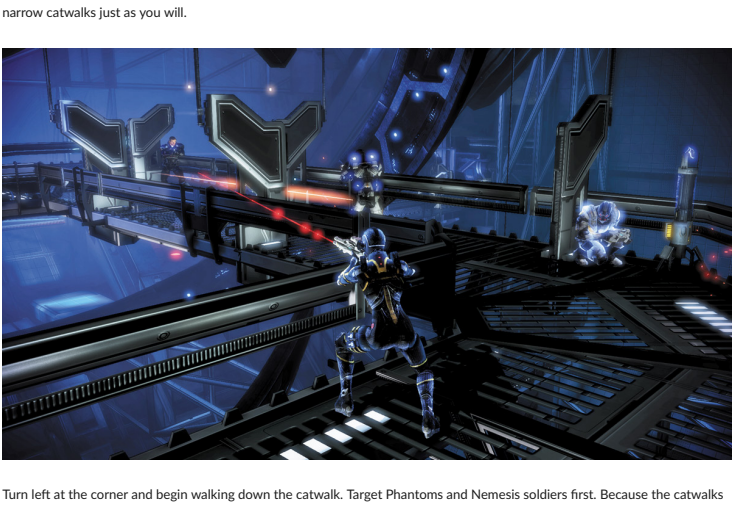
PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

These are the remnants of the human proto-Reaper that Shepard faced at the end of *Mass Effect 2* . Rather than leave the hybrid creature to rot, Cerberus salvaged it and is now using it for its own purposes.

PROTO-REAPER CHAMBER



The walkways around the proto-Reaper's chamber are narrow and don't offer much cover, save for the small partitions along the sides. Luckily, you'll be facing Nemesis Troopers, Assault Troopers, and Phantoms in this section, so they'll be limited by the narrow catwalks just as you will.



Turn left at the corner and begin walking down the catwalk. Target Phantoms and Nemesis soldiers first. Because the catwalks are so narrow, the Phantoms will be forced to attack you head-on.

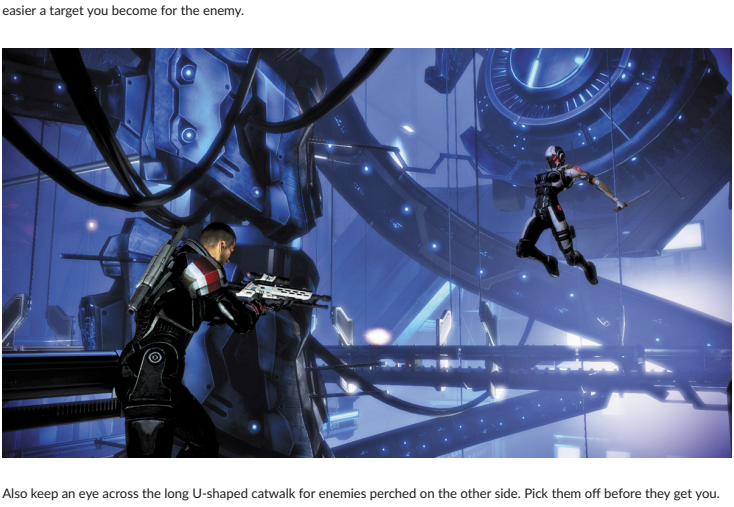
Use your team's powers (Singularity, Shockwave, Throw, etc.) to knock them off balance and off guard.

If you have grenades, use those as well. Once the Phantoms are vulnerable, unload heavy fire on them to put them down.

Nemesis soldiers will stay near the catwalk's far end to maximize the length of the catwalk and snipe at you. Return the favor by using sniper-rifle fire or other long-range powers to take them out. Keep your squad moving down the catwalks steadily; this will pressure the Nemesis, allow you clean shots at the Assault Troopers, and keep the Phantoms readjusting to your movement.

As you progress, enemies will attempt to rush you from behind. There is a series of catwalks below you as well, and the Troopers will use them to run past your position and appear from behind you.

Keep your line staggered as you move so that you could easily keep an eye behind you as well. The closer together you are, the easier a target you become for the enemy.



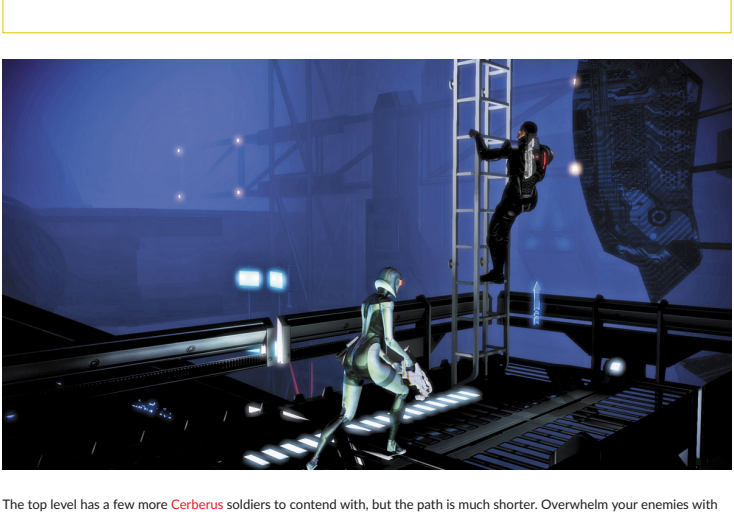
Also keep an eye across the long U-shaped catwalk for enemies perched on the other side. Pick them off before they get you. Go all the way around the catwalks, taking out Troopers as you go until you reach the next ladder.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

This fight can contain bonus characters, depending on choices you made in *Mass Effect 2* and *Mass Effect 3* .

Jack will show up as a Phantom if she survived in *Mass Effect 2* , but you skipped the Grissom Academy mission.

Legion Assassin will show up if you sold him to Cerberus in *Mass Effect 2* .



The top level has a few more Cerberus soldiers to contend with, but the path is much shorter. Overwhelm your enemies with close-range fire, power combinations, and grenades until you've cleared a path to the ladder at the other end.

If you need to stop and take cover, use the partitions on the left and right sides of the walkways to regenerate your shields.

Make a left inside the next room and find another Cerberus Video Log console near the center of the walkway. Activate it to view three more video files. These videos are about Paul Grayson, a former Cerberus operative.

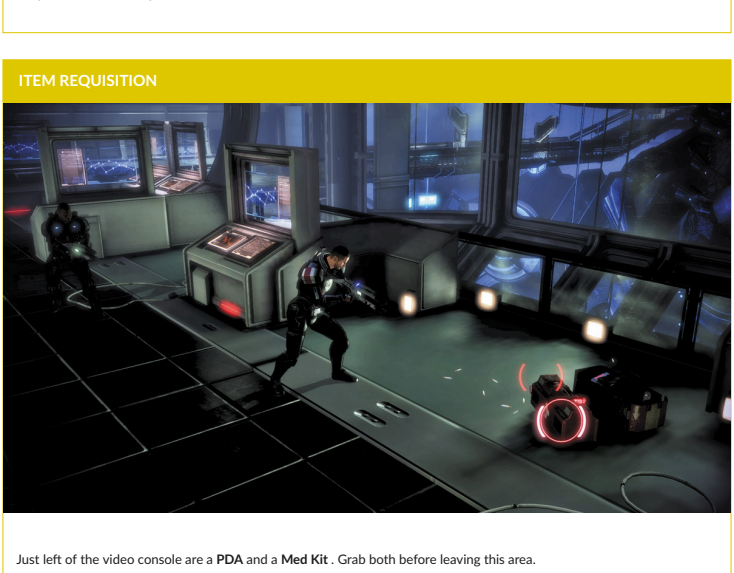
ITEM REQUISITION

After going up the ladder, turn around and go down the catwalk in the opposite direction of the door; you will find some ammo, **Medi-Gel** , and another **PDA** with credits.

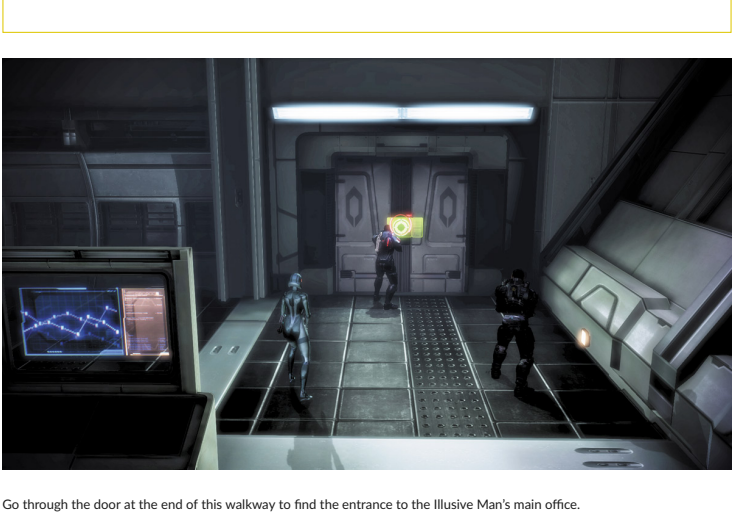
PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

Listen to these video logs carefully. They're about a former red sand addict and ex-Cerberus operative named Paul Grayson. Learn his story from the novels *Mass Effect: Ascension* and *Mass Effect: Retribution* .

ITEM REQUISITION

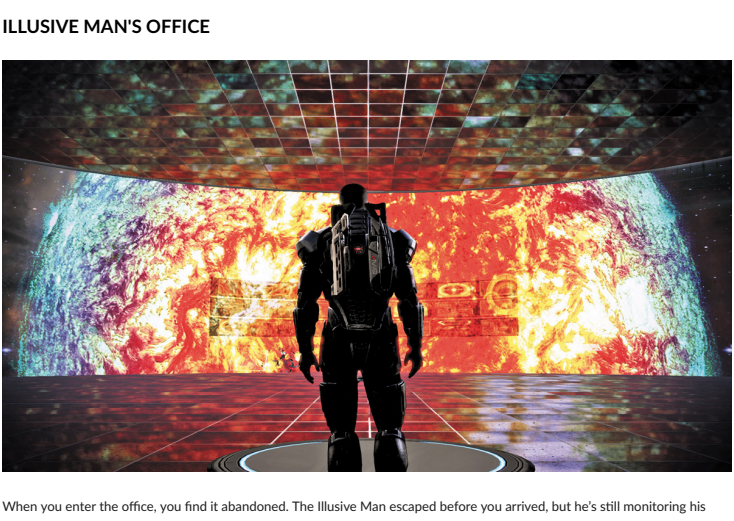


Just left of the video console are a **PDA** and a **Med Kit** . Grab both before leaving this area.



Go through the door at the end of this walkway to find the entrance to the Illusive Man's main office.

ILLUSIVE MAN'S OFFICE



When you enter the office, you find it abandoned. The Illusive Man escaped before you arrived, but he's still monitoring his base. When you try to access his computer to locate the Prothean VI, the Illusive Man appears through holo-communication.

TIP

The ensuing conversations between you and the Illusive Man and the Prothean VI will garner Paragon/Renegade points, depending on how you respond to each.

Engage the Illusive Man in conversation during this confrontation and ask him what the Catalyst is. He won't tell you, but he will encourage you to ask the Prothean VI. You can also engage him in a Paragon/Renegade persuasion.

The Illusive Man won't change his mind about his plans to control the Reapers, so end the conversation according to your Paragon/Renegade leaning and resume your search for the Catalyst with the Prothean VI.

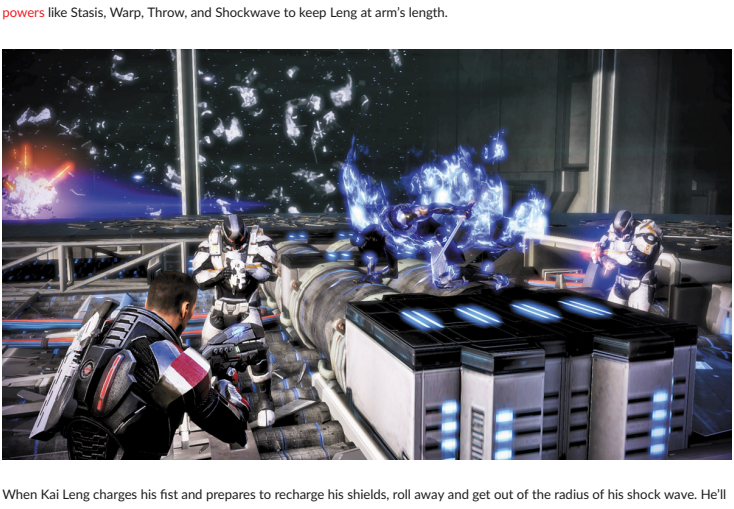
Listen to the Prothean VI's explanation of what the Catalyst is, its history, and how it works with the Crucible to destroy the Reapers. Unfortunately, he explains that the Illusive Man has already informed the Reapers of your plans to use the Crucible, and they've taken control of the Catalyst before you can get to it.

Just then, Kai Leng arrives at the Illusive Man's office. He's ready to end this fight once and for all.

KAI LENG BATTLE

Kai Leng immediately attacks, so press the Melee button repeatedly to shake loose of his grip. When the battle begins, Leng is nearly across the entire office, so begin unloading on him from a distance and use explosive power combos to inflict as much damage as possible.

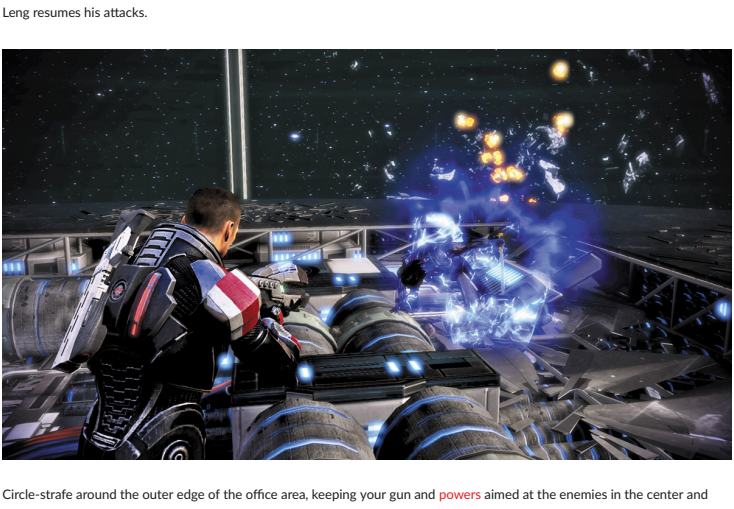
Activate EDI's Decoy ability, and spread your team out across the now-darkened office to give Kai Leng multiple targets all at a distance. Soldiers can use Adrenaline to slow down time and get clean shots at the assassin, while other classes can rely on powers like Stasis, Warp, Throw, and Shockwave to keep Leng at arm's length.



When Kai Leng charges his fist and prepares to recharge his shields, roll away and get out of the radius of his shock wave. He'll slam his fist on the ground and unleash a radial shock wave that can deplete your shields and destroy the ground around him.

The shock wave is followed by the arrival of several Cerberus forces: Assault Troopers at first, then Nemesis, and finally Phantoms.

Launch a grenade or other explosive power at the soldiers as they arrive; eliminate them as quickly as possible. Kai Leng will continue to recharge a bit longer while his soldiers hold you off, so turn your attention to them and take them all out before Leng resumes his attacks.

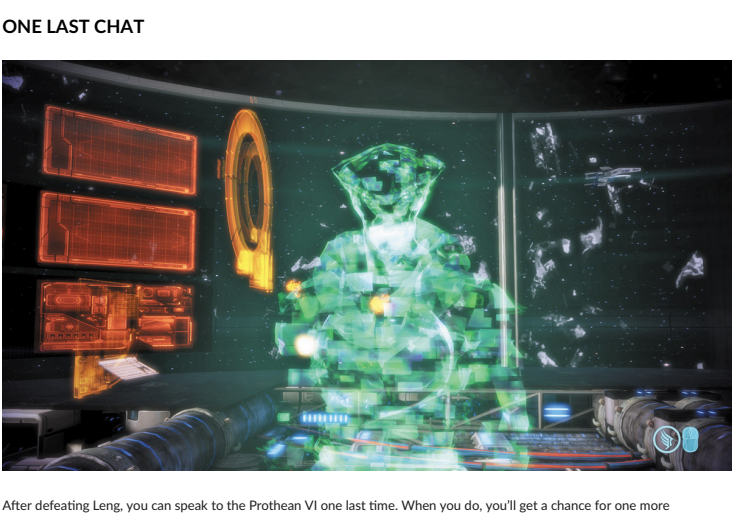


Circle-strafe around the outer edge of the office area, keeping your gun and powers aimed at the enemies in the center and slowly work down Kai Leng's health. Even though he has a long-range attack, Leng prefers close-quarters combat, so stay away (unless you're a Sentinel or Vanguard), and pick him off until he falls.

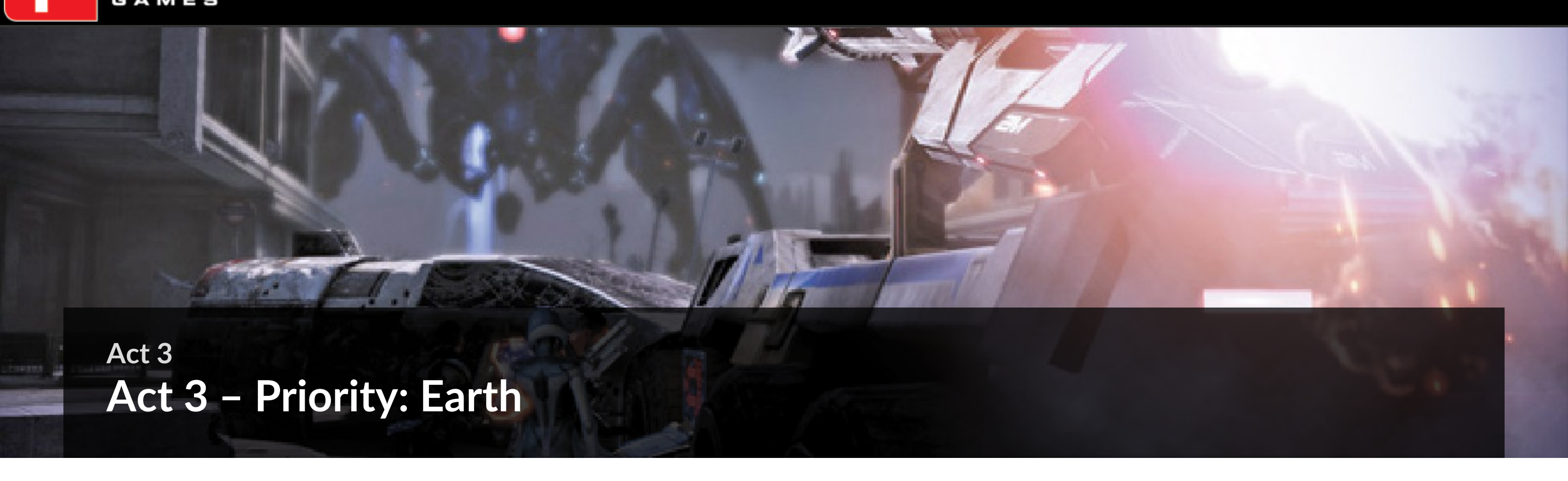
TIP

Vanguard players can use close-quarters combat to engage Leng and knock off major chunks of health using Biotic Charge, Nova, and charged melee combos. Similarly, Sentinels can use close-quarter weapons like a shotgun and charged melee attacks to knock Leng away momentarily.

ONE LAST CHAT

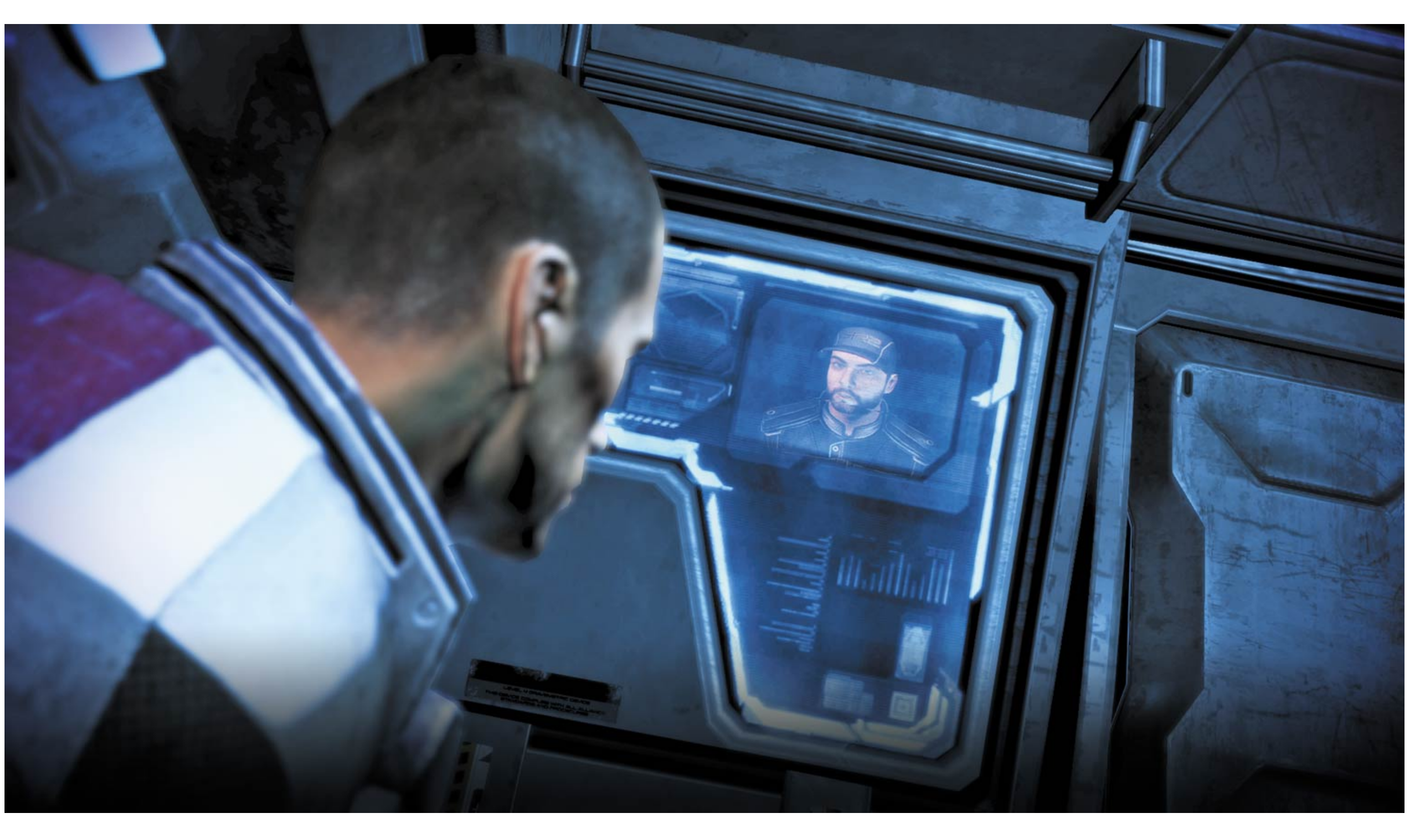


After defeating Leng, you can speak to the Prothean VI one last time. When you do, you'll get a chance for one more Paragon/Renegade interrupt. Back on the Normandy, you speak with Admiral Anderson. He's ready to launch the final attack on the Reapers...and it starts in London, England.



Act 3

Act 3 – Priority: Earth



The Citadel is now in orbit over Earth, in the heart of Reaper-controlled space. A final assault on Earth is the only way to deliver the Crucible to the Citadel and defeat the Reapers. Launch the assault on Earth when ready.

MISSION BRIEFING

Battlegrounds: The battle arenas during this last mission are as varied as ever. You'll fight uphill, across labyrinthine plazas, through war-torn buildings, and across narrow brute-filled alleys, and you'll even find yourself surrounded by enemies at a deadly intersection.

Once again, adaptable players with varied skill sets will have the easiest time changing from one battleground to the next. However, that doesn't mean it'll be easy. You'll fight across the full gamut of Reaper forces all the way from lowly Husks to a Reaper Destroyer.

Conserve your Medi-Gel packs during this mission as much as possible and use them only to revive fallen squadmates. The final few waves of enemies will test you and push you to your limit.

Consequence Overview: Although you have a major choice after dealing with the Illusive Man, these choices are all morally gray. You may feel that destroying the Reapers is the Paragon option or that controlling them to leave the galaxy in better condition is the Paragon choice. Regardless of what you choose, you'll get a major Reputation bonus.

Paragon/Renegade

You can convince the Illusive Man of his own indoctrination, after which he ends his own life (by either shooting himself or by storming directly into your line of fire).

This is actually a series of Paragon/Renegade persuasion options that get progressively harder. To complete the final persuasion successfully, you must have used a persuasion on the Illusive Man in every one of your earlier conversations—on Mars, Thessia, in the Illusive Man's base, and the three previously in this conversation.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Data Pad x3	Medical Station
Hydra Missile Launcher	Med Kit (x8)
M-920 Cain	

AROUND THE GALAXY

Mission Unlocks

None

Mission Locks

All remaining missions remain closed.

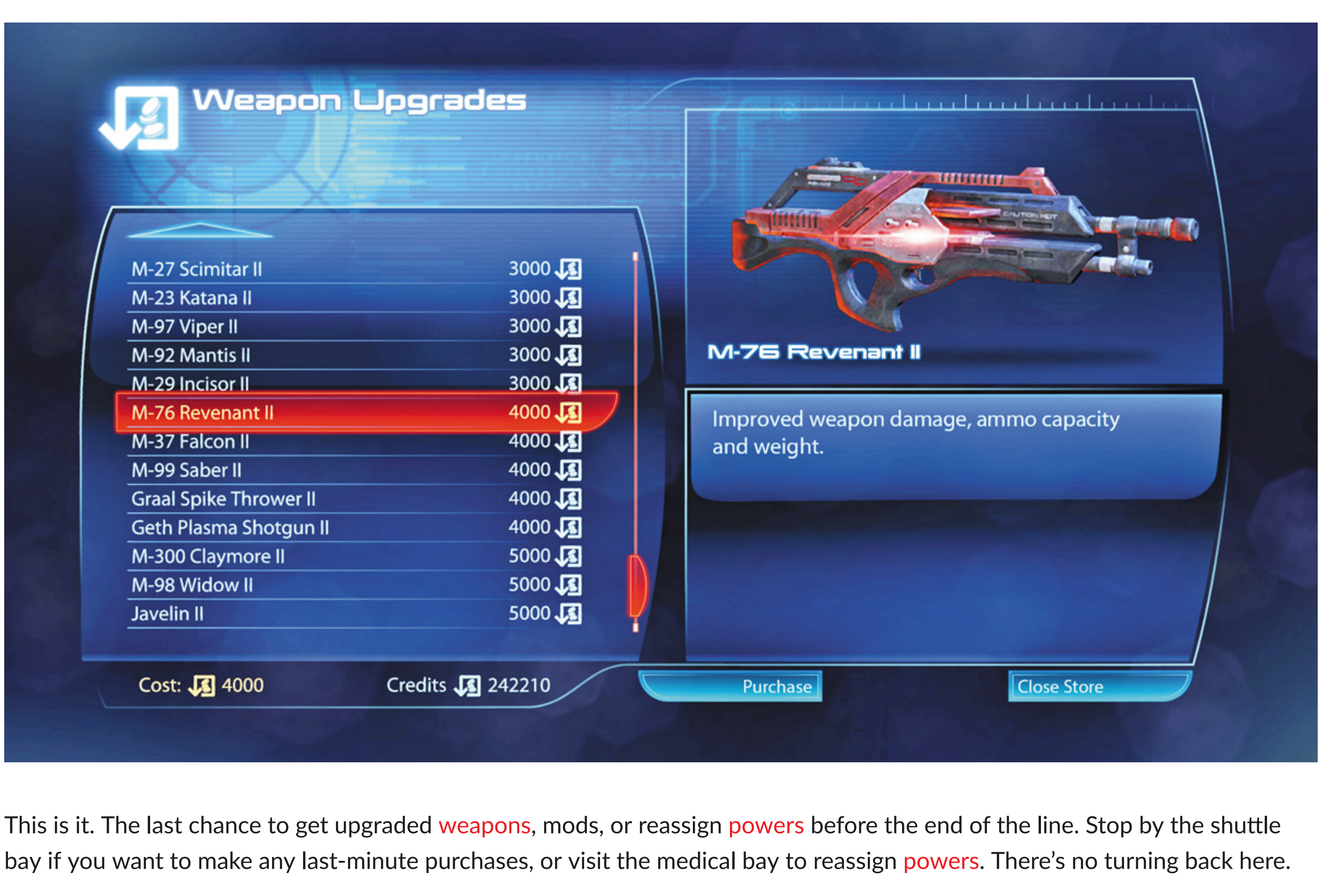
WAR PREPARATIONS

Commander Shepard has fought through horrific resistance to reach the Citadel, only to end up in a standoff with the Illusive Man, who now has the ability to indoctrinate humans and control their actions.

Shepard must deal with the Illusive Man, then activate the Crucible and decide the fate of the Reapers...and the galaxy.

If you'd like to get straight to the next mission, skip to the "Order Fleets to Earth" section later in this guide.

Final Upgrades



Weapon Upgrades

M-27 Scimitar II	3000
M-23 Katana II	3000
M-97 Viper II	3000
M-92 Mantis II	3000
M-29 Incisor II	3000
M-76 Revenant II	4000
M-37 Falcon II	4000
M-99 Saber II	4000
Graal Spike Thrower II	4000
Geth Plasma Shotgun II	4000
M-300 Claymore II	5000
M-98 Widow II	5000
Javelin II	5000

M-76 Revenant II

Improved weapon damage, ammo capacity and weight.

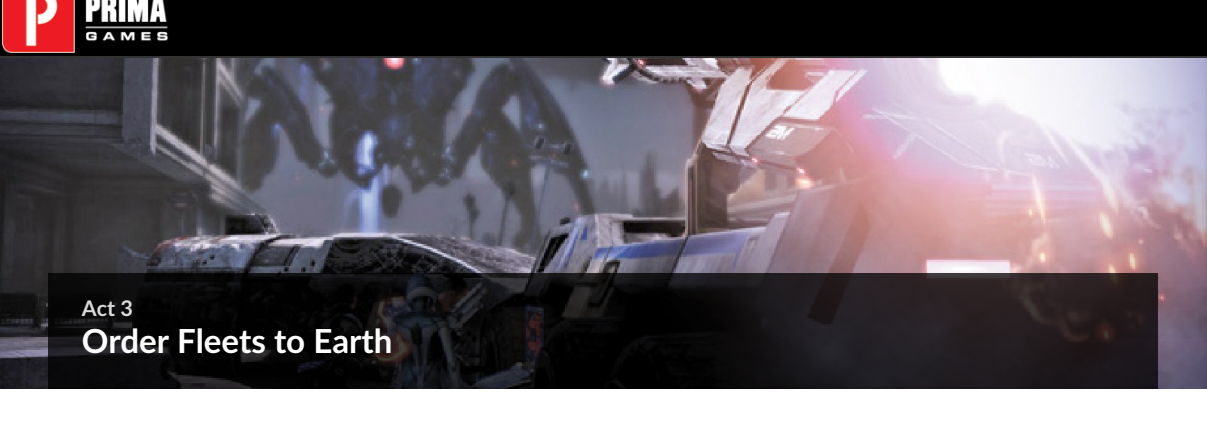
Cost: 4000

Credits 242210

This is it. The last chance to get upgraded weapons, mods, or reassign powers before the end of the line. Stop by the shuttle bay if you want to make any last-minute purchases, or visit the medical bay to reassign powers. There's no turning back here.

NOTE

At this point, the Galaxy Map will have only one option open: "Order Fleets to Earth."



Act 3

Order Fleets to Earth

Just before the assault on Earth, Admiral Hackett comes aboard the Normandy.

He readies the fleets to attack and gives one more rousing speech in preparation. After Admiral Hackett's speech, you'll speak with Admiral Anderson over vid-com.

In order to reach the Citadel, you must get to the Citadel Beam with a ground force (code-named Hammer). However, London is being guarded by several Hades Cannons.

You must bring a smaller landing force to take out the Cannons so the main Hammer force can land and make an assault on the Citadel Beam.

En route to Earth, a cutscene will show all of your efforts in recruiting the various species come to fruition. Joker calmly lists all of the fleets as they report for the assault.

NOTE

Listen carefully to Joker's dialogue here. He rattles off the names of all the fleets you were able to recruit. This segment is a direct testament to your actions throughout the game.

A series of short cutscenes will also show some of the aforementioned species readying for battle.

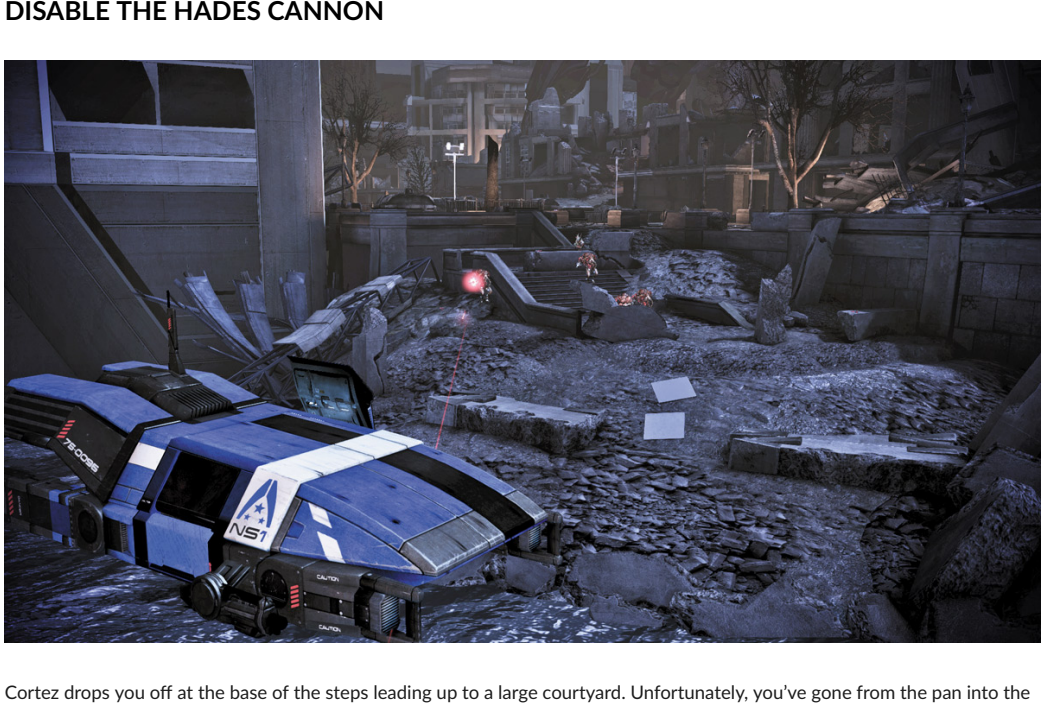
Though the galactic fleet is ready, the sheer number of Reapers in the area are overwhelming. The Reaper forces begin to shred through the left flank with ease, if your Effective Military Score is low.

They overtake massive ships and crush them as if they were nothing. That's when Joker seizes the opportunity and breaks off from the fleet and sets a direct course to Earth.

Your shuttle manages to penetrate the Reaper forces guarding Earth, but before the shuttle accompanying yours can land and disable the Reaper's Hades Cannon, it gets shot down.

That cannon is now your responsibility.

DISABLE THE HADES CANNON



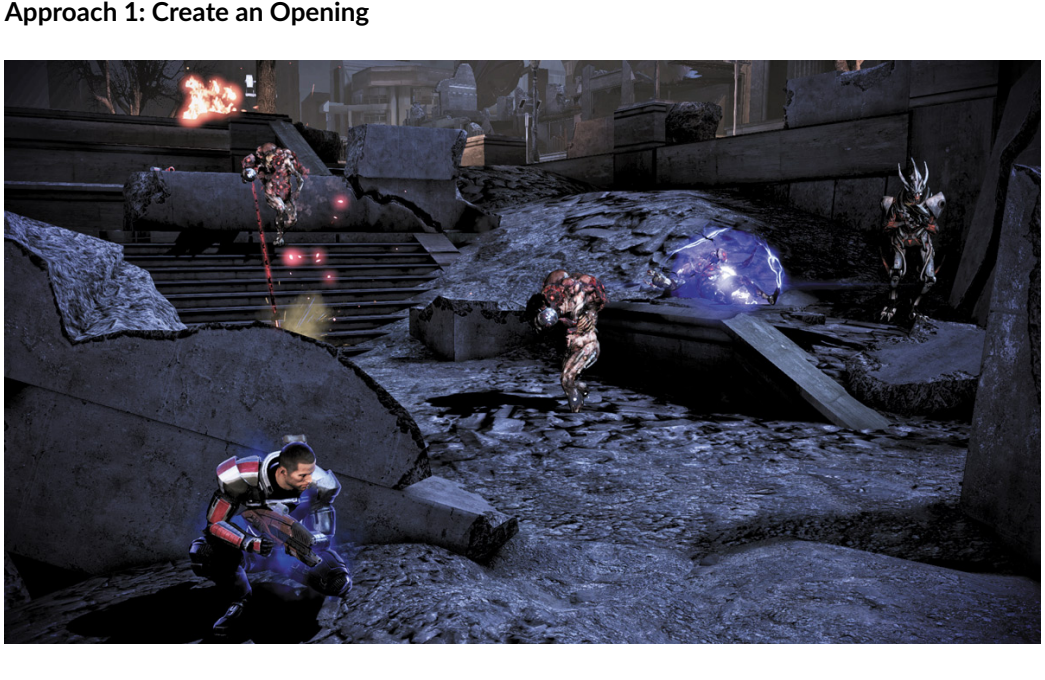
Cortez drops you off at the base of the steps leading up to a large courtyard. Unfortunately, you've gone from the pan into the fire.

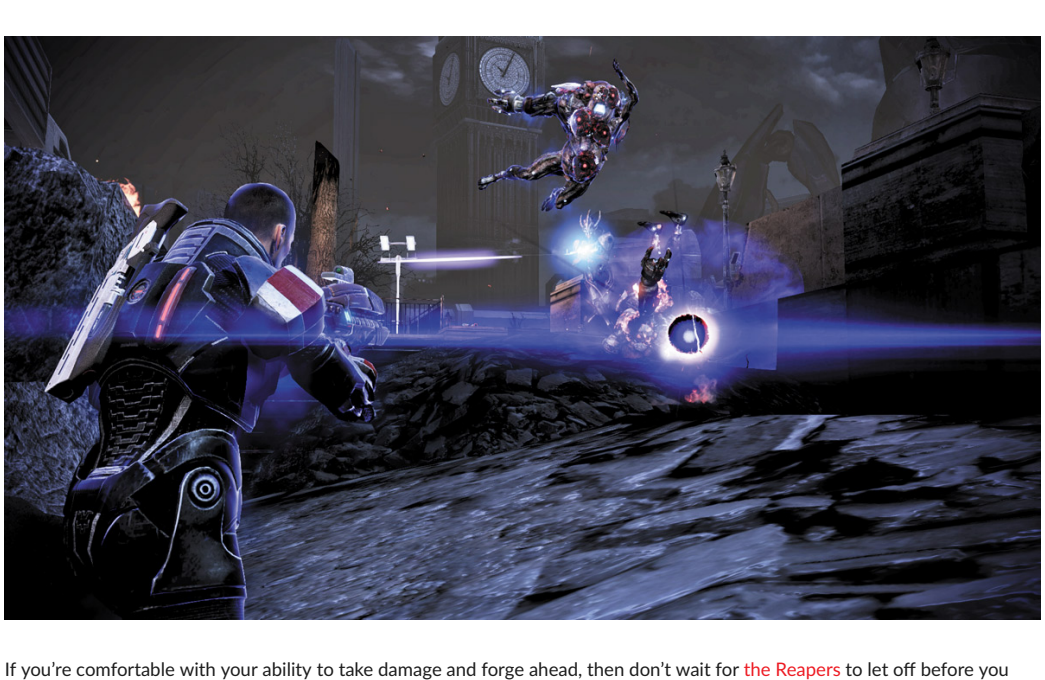
You begin this battle in a lower position than your enemy, and you're greatly outnumbered as well. This is not going to be an easy battle; in fact, it's going to be an uphill battle, literally.

TIP

If you have Cryo Ammo or Cryo Blast, or a teammate with those abilities, rely on it heavily during this mission. If sufficiently upgraded, both powers can freeze enemies temporarily and take them out of the fight.

Approach 1: Create an Opening





If you're comfortable with your ability to take damage and forge ahead, then don't wait for the Reapers to let off before you clear out of the starting area.

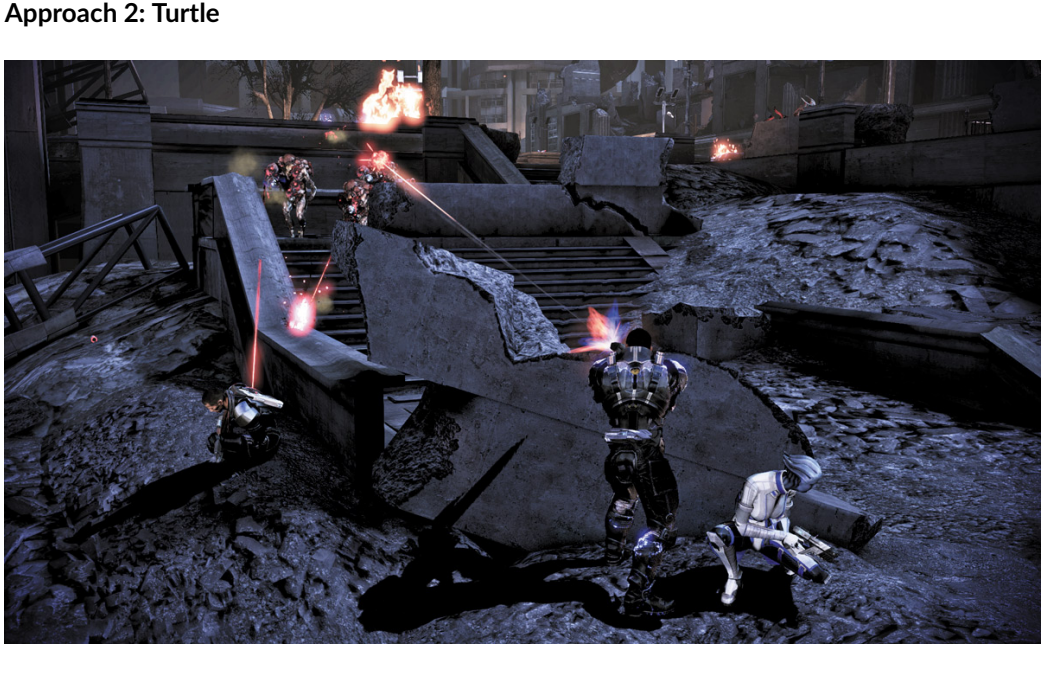
Deploy drones or decoys ahead of you (or send your toughest squad member if you don't have the ability to launch drones), then leave cover and follow behind them.

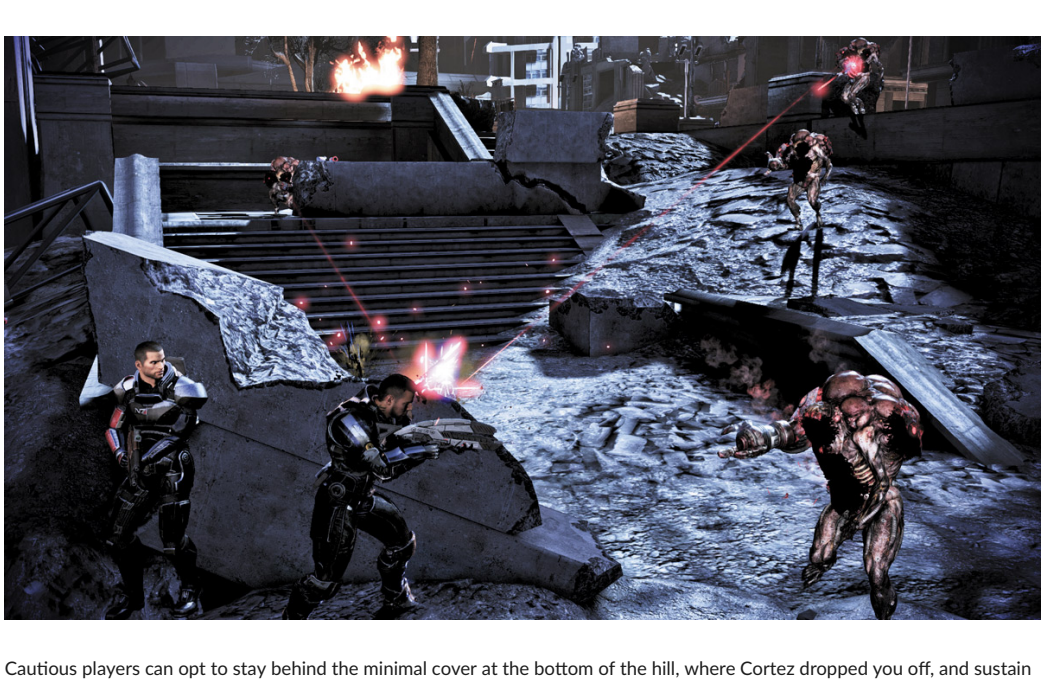
Open up with grenades or explosive power combinations to begin clearing a path.

If you're taking damage from your right side, assign a team member to cover that side, then continue your careful march up the hill.

Your goal is to punch through the first wave of enemies at the top of the small hill and establish a position near the top. From here, you can take cover and plan your move into the plaza.

Approach 2: Turtle





Cautious players can opt to stay behind the minimal cover at the bottom of the hill, where Cortez dropped you off, and sustain the first few waves of enemies as they attack.

They may try to overwhelm you with heavy fire, so stay behind cover and pick your shots carefully.

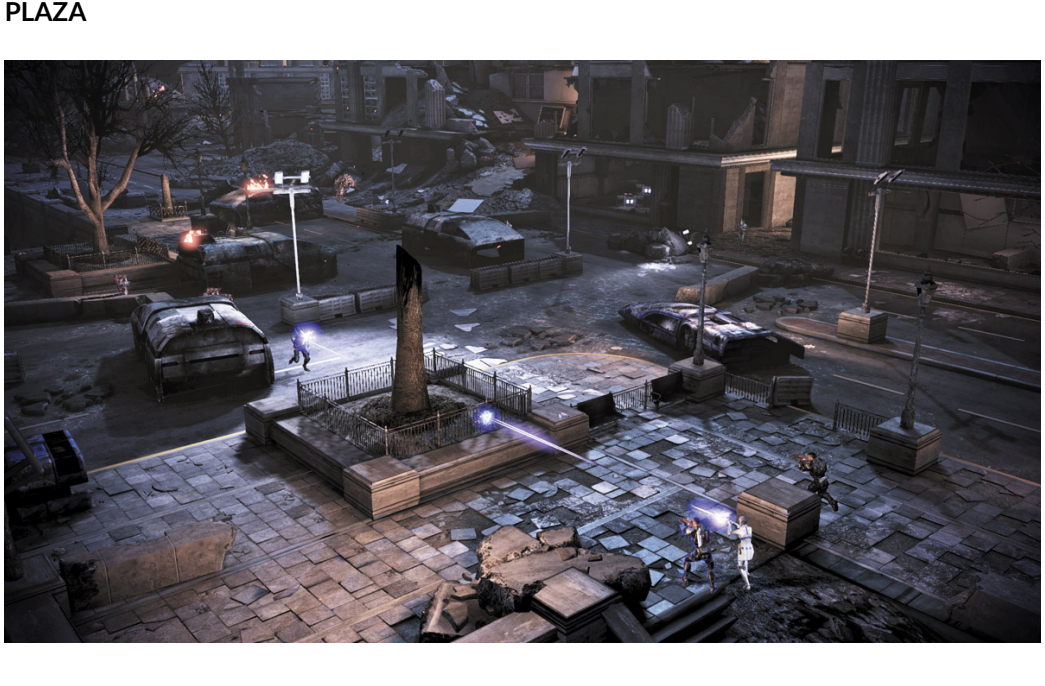
Use explosives to take out multiple enemies at once. If you try to take down only one at a time, you'll end up pinned and eventually run out of ammunition.

Instead, rely on powers to dish out the majority of damage, then finish off enemies with the least amount of ammunition possible.

This particular tactic may be a bit more effective at higher difficulties where careful ammo rationing is essential and enemies take more hits to kill.

Once you've dwindled their numbers significantly, leave your cover and rush to the top of the hill where you can launch your assault on the plaza.

PLAZA



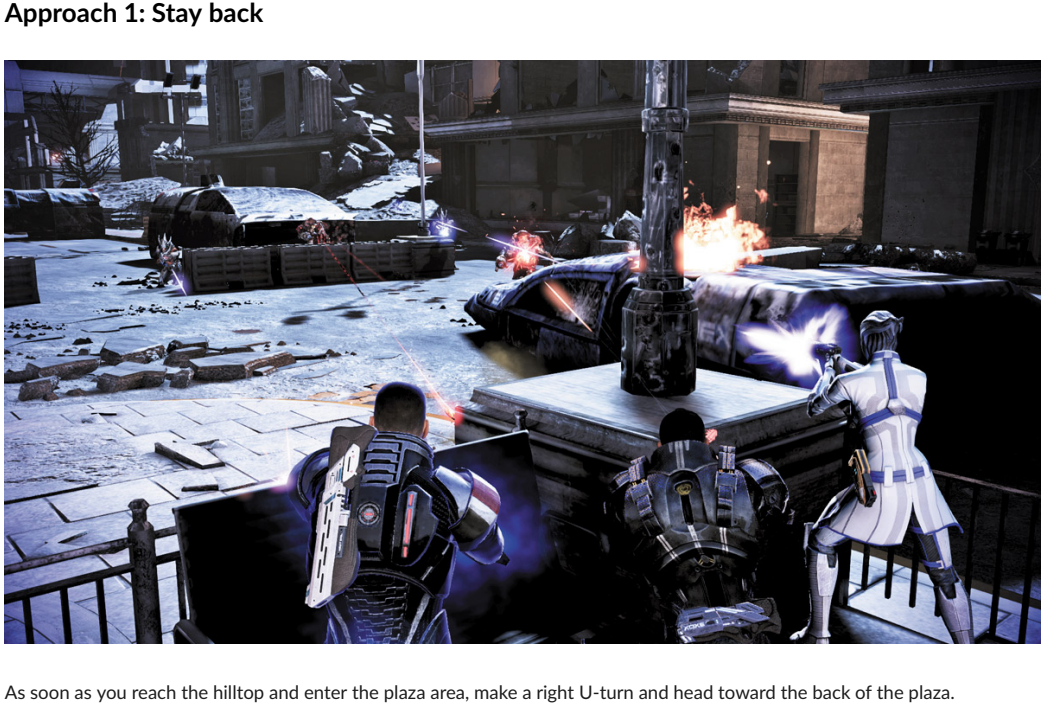
The hilltop leads to a long plaza.

Several gates, short walls, planters, and posts create sections within the plaza where you can take cover and slowly advance to far right corner where a landslide of rubble leads to the Hades Cannon.

Along the plaza's far right edge are a series of buildings that can provide excellent cover and serve as an avenue to the plaza's far end.

The area will be swarming with Marauders, Brutes, and Cannibals, so keep to cover as much as possible no matter which approach you decide to take.

Approach 1: Stay back



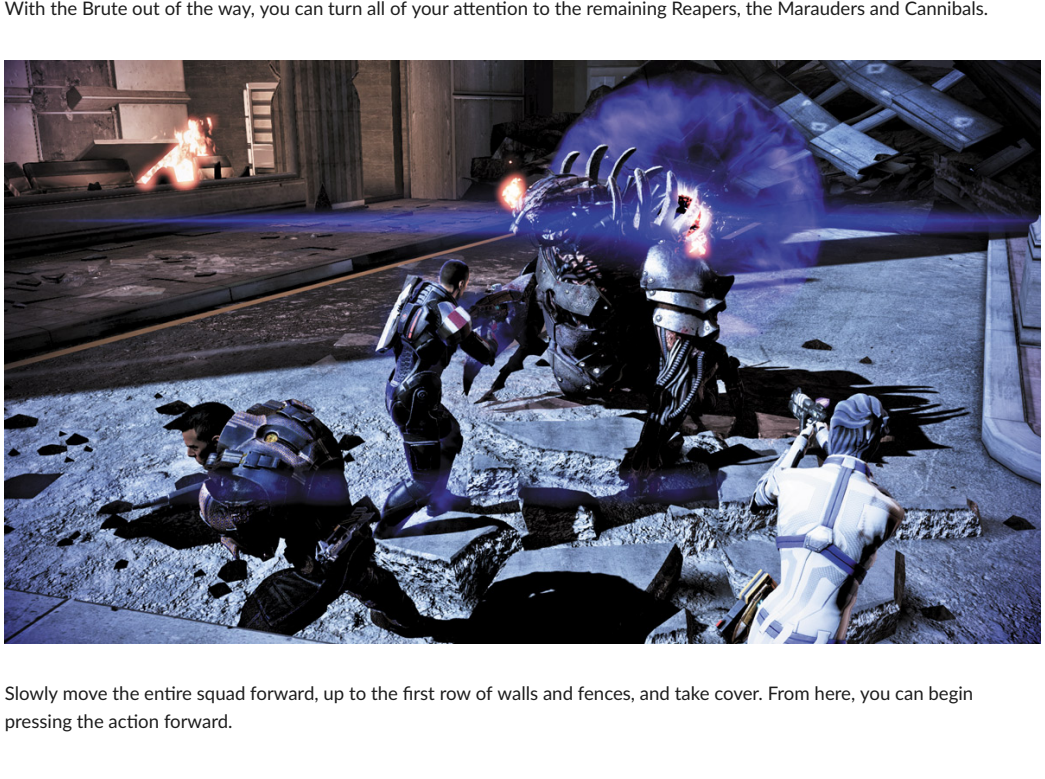
As soon as you reach the hilltop and enter the plaza area, make a right U-turn and head toward the back of the plaza.

Do not advance into the plaza yet; instead, hang back for a bit behind cover and get a wide view of the plaza ahead. From here, you can spot Reapers as they come.

When the Brute attacks, use drones or decoys to distract it while you decimate it.

If it targets you or a teammate, carefully lead it across the back end of the plaza and force it to navigate the many walls and partitions.

With the Brute out of the way, you can turn all of your attention to the remaining Reapers, the Marauders and Cannibals.

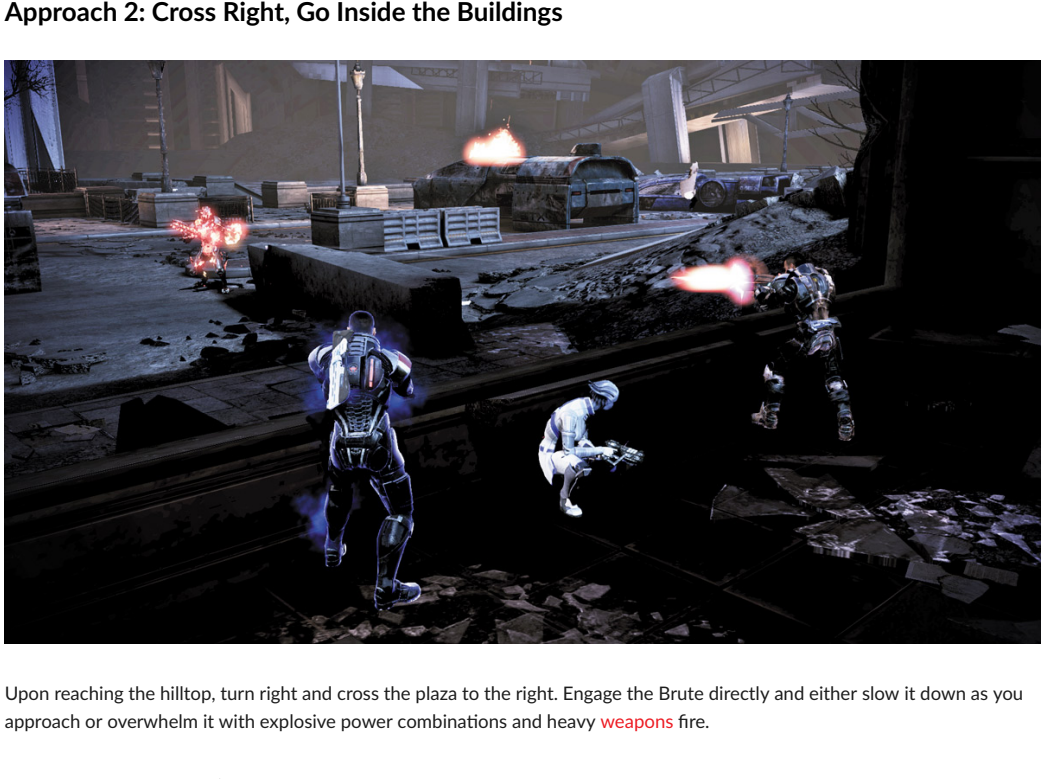


Slowly move the entire squad forward, up to the first row of walls and fences, and take cover. From here, you can begin pressing the action forward.

If you are a sniper-proficient class, equip your long-range weapon and begin picking off foes at the far end.

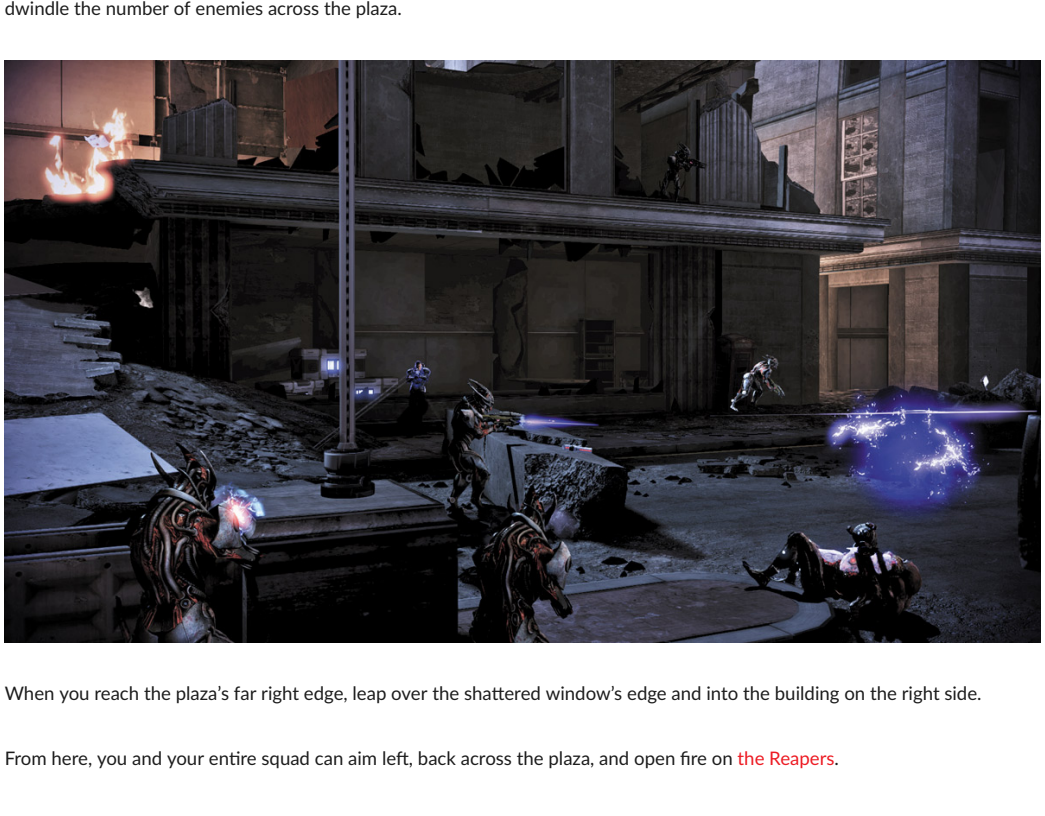
When the second brute attacks, you can engage it directly and overpower it using the combined efforts of your entire team, or once again, use cat-and-mouse tactics to distract it while you systematically deplete its health.

Approach 2: Cross Right, Go Inside the Buildings



Upon reaching the hilltop, turn right and cross the plaza to the right. Engage the Brute directly and either slow it down as you approach or overwhelm it with explosive power combinations and heavy weapons fire.

When you reach the plaza's far end, duck behind the short concrete wall for cover and use grenades or other explosives to dwindle the number of enemies across the plaza.



When you reach the plaza's far right edge, leap over the shattered window's edge and into the building on the right side.

From here, you and your entire squad can aim left, back across the plaza, and open fire on the Reapers.

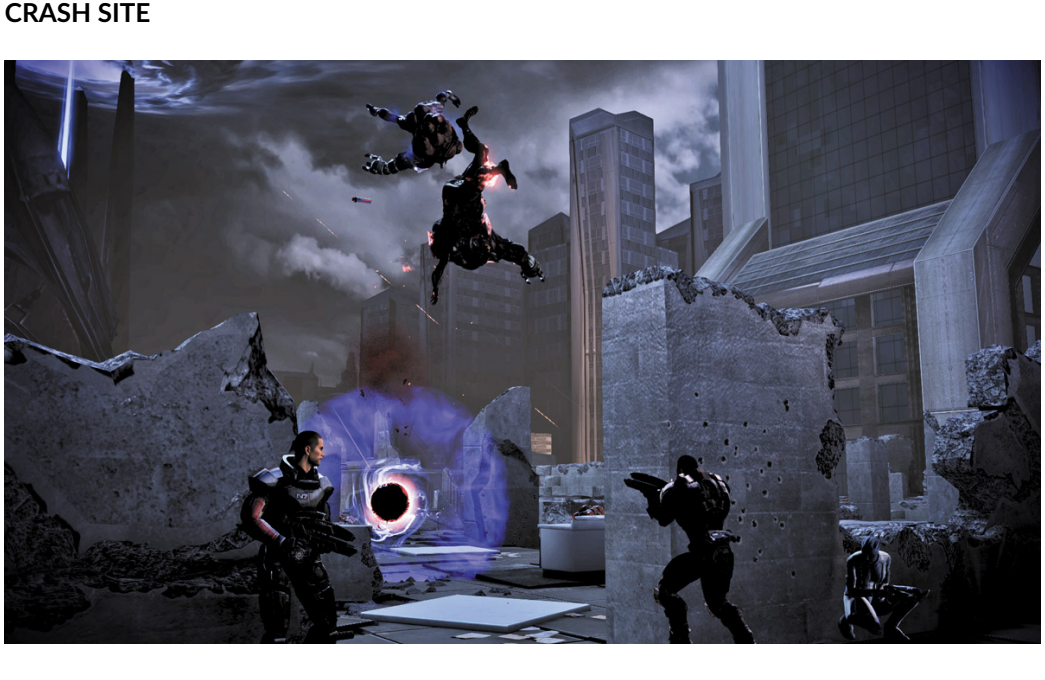
Alternatively, you can leave your squad outside and direct them from cover to cover as you slowly move across the interior of both buildings.

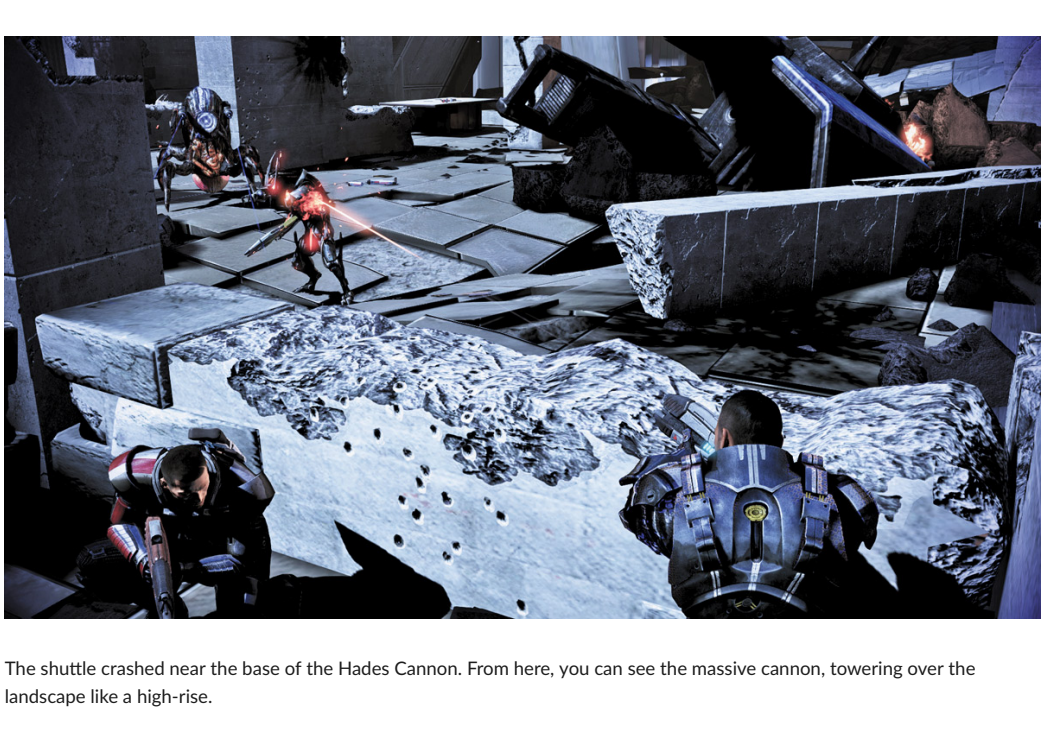
By leaving one or both members of your squad outside, you can create a cross fire across nearly the entire plaza by moving them down the plaza while you shift right down the building interiors.

Slowly move all the way down, and clear out the plaza until you reach the far end.

Go up the rubble incline at the far end to reach the shuttle crash site near the base of the Hades Cannon.

CRASH SITE



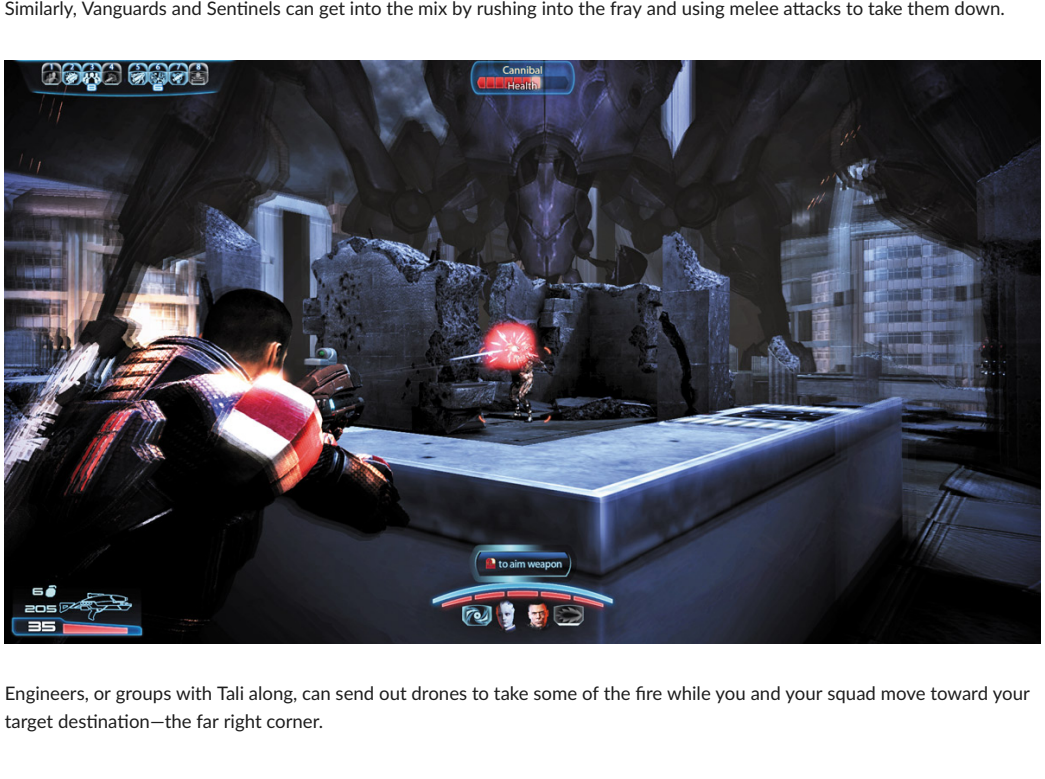


The shuttle crashed near the base of the Hades Cannon. From here, you can see the massive cannon, towering over the landscape like a high-rise.

The area is full of Cannibals, so take cover and wait for the cannon to stop firing. During the lull in cannon fire, pop out of cover and begin clearing a path toward the area's right corner.

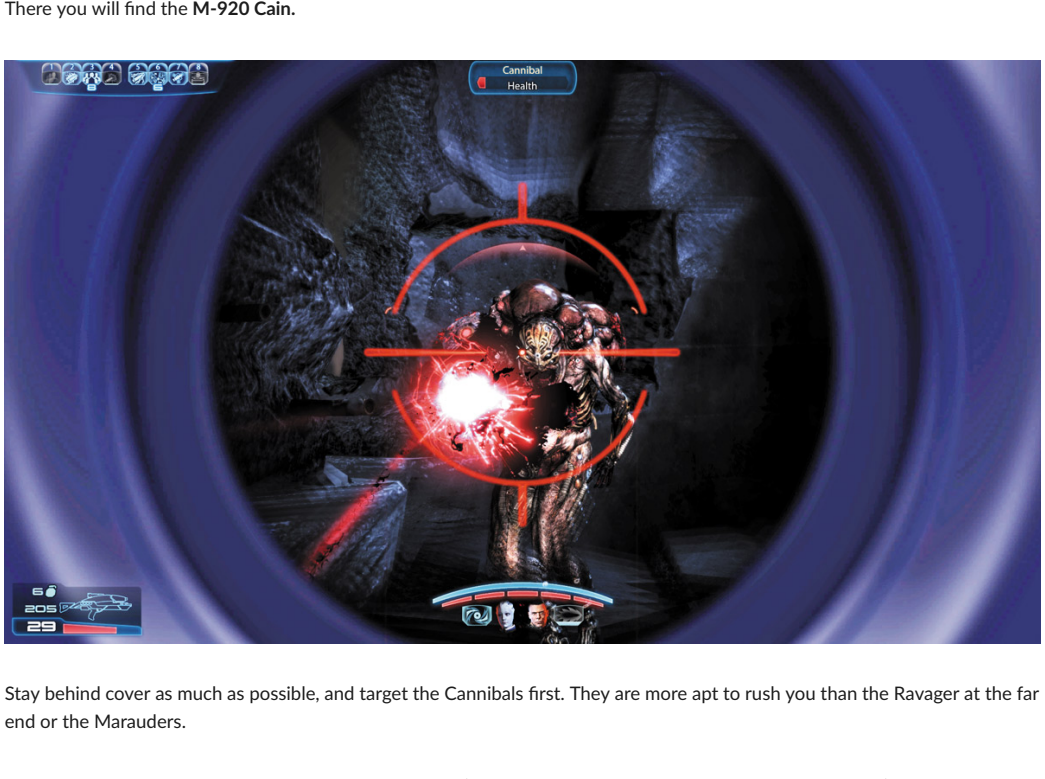
Soldiers can use Adrenaline to slow down time, while Infiltrators can sneak past several enemies at once with the use of their Tactical Cloak.

Similarly, Vanguards and Sentinels can get into the mix by rushing into the fray and using melee attacks to take them down.



Engineers, or groups with Tali along, can send out drones to take some of the fire while you and your squad move toward your target destination—the far right corner.

There you will find the **M-920 Cain.**

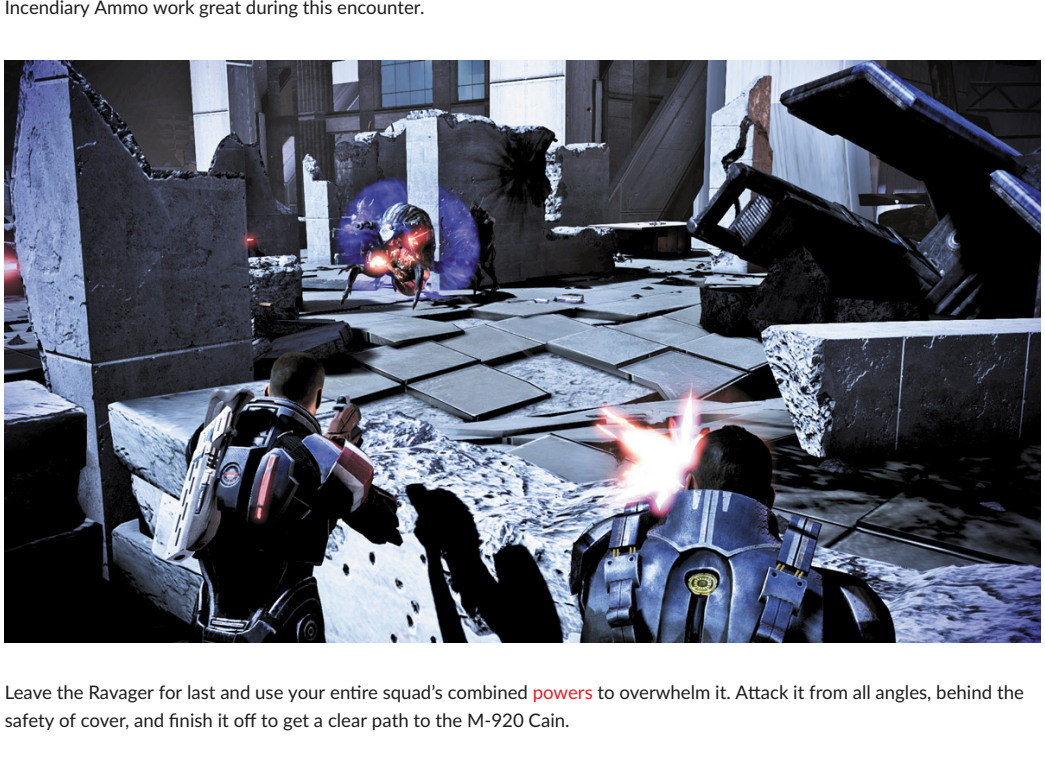


Stay behind cover as much as possible, and target the Cannibals first. They are more apt to rush you than the Ravager at the far end or the Marauders.

The Cannibals are also capable of resurrecting once they've been downed, so take them out quickly and don't let them rise again.

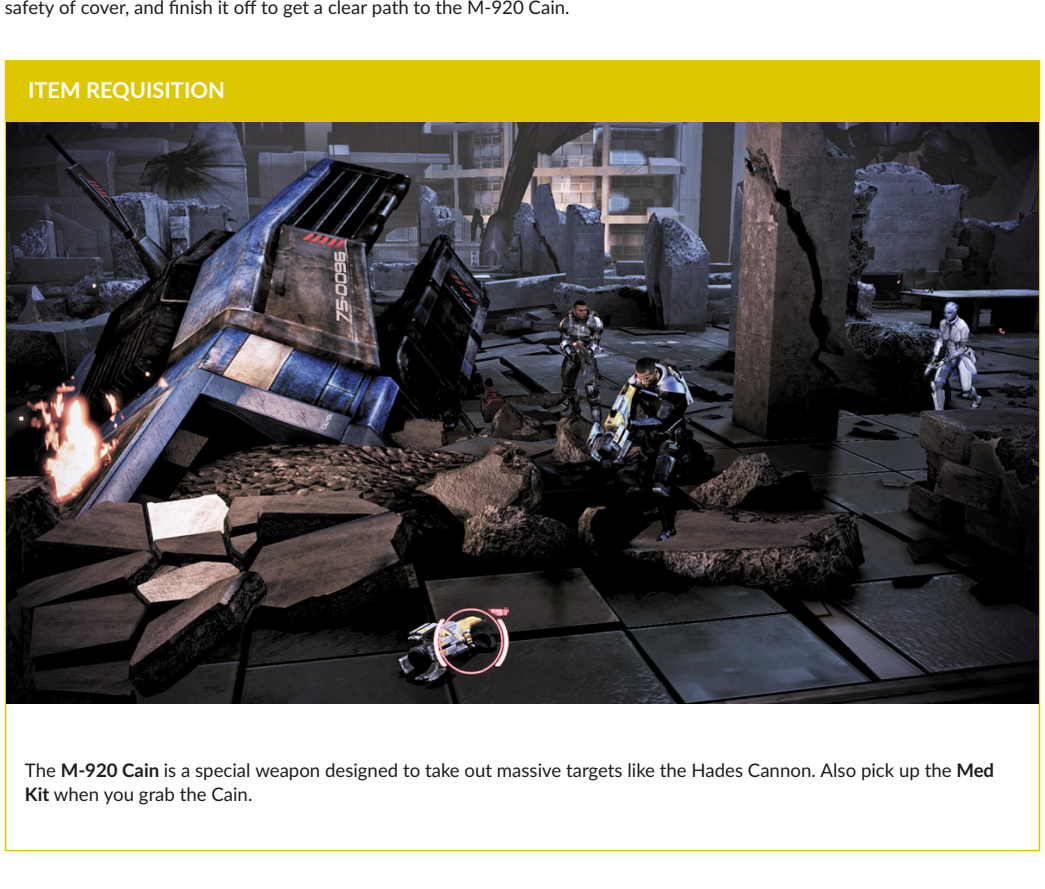
Even though the area may be cluttered with debris, you can still use your sniper rifle to eliminate Marauders at the far end.

If you don't have a sniper rifle, then use destructive powers like Incinerate, Cryo Blast, or Warp. Otherwise, things like Cryo or Incendiary Ammo work great during this encounter.

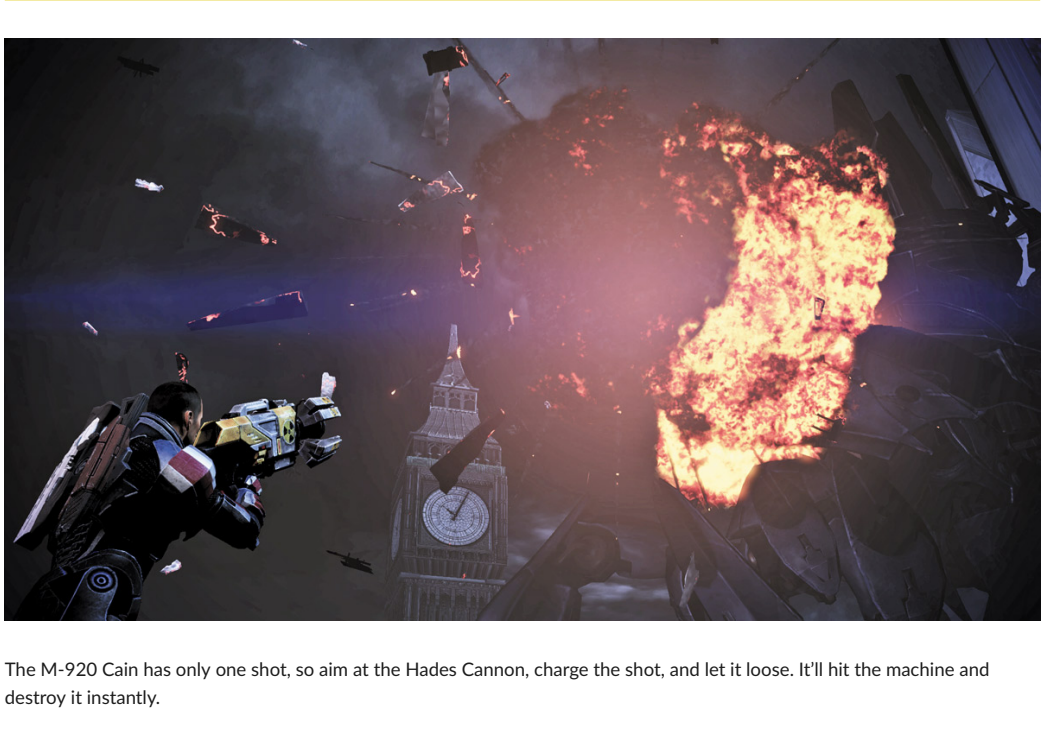


Leave the Ravager for last and use your entire squad's combined powers to overwhelm it. Attack it from all angles, behind the safety of cover, and finish it off to get a clear path to the M-920 Cain.

ITEM REQUISITION



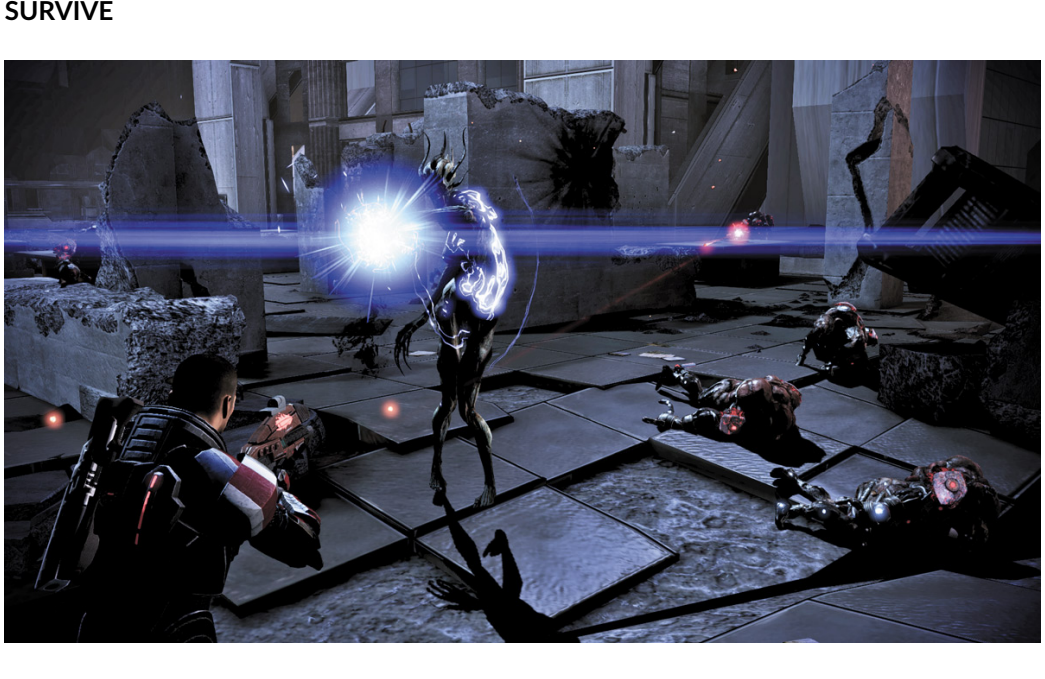
The **M-920 Cain** is a special weapon designed to take out massive targets like the Hades Cannon. Also pick up the **Med Kit** when you grab the Cain.

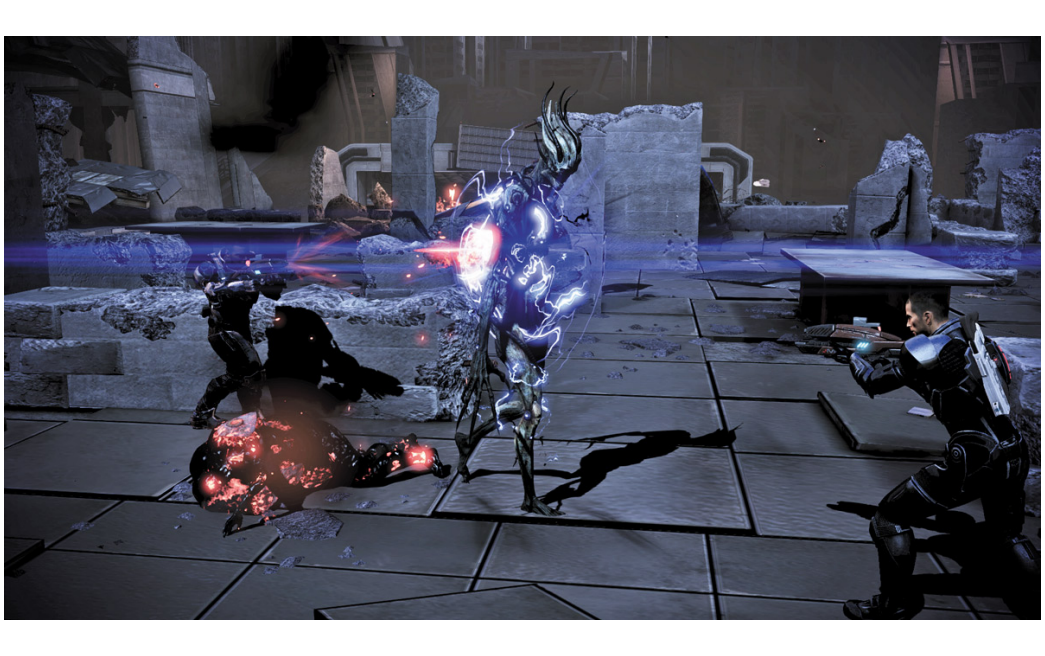


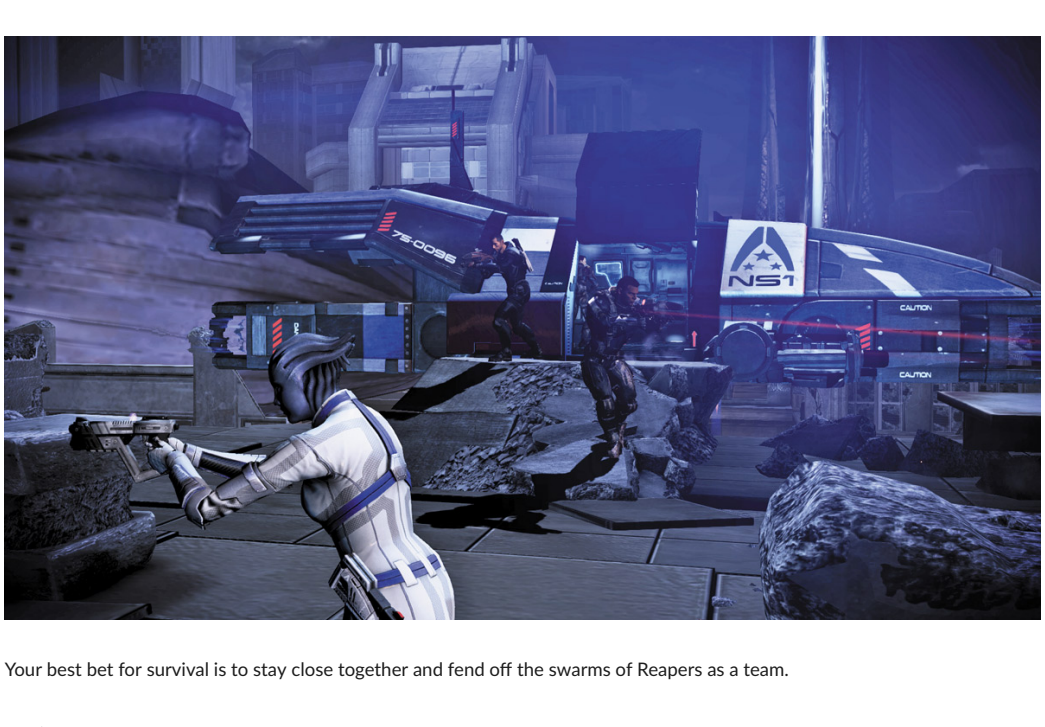
The M-920 Cain has only one shot, so aim at the Hades Cannon, charge the shot, and let it loose. It'll hit the machine and destroy it instantly.

If you should miss with your first shot, pick up the other M-920 Cain and take a second shot. With the Hades Cannon down, you draw the attention of dozens of Reapers.

SURVIVE







Your best bet for survival is to stay close together and fend off the swarms of Reapers as a team.

Don't spread out too much in this mazelike area; instead, direct your squad to take cover behind the small table on the right and the short wall on the left and wait for the area to quickly become overrun by Cannibals from the opposite side and eventually, a Banshee.

Combine your firepower on the Banshee first. She'll attack from the far right side, and her radial shock-wave attack can remove your entire squad's shields, rendering all of you vulnerable to the Cannibals' fire.

If you take her down first, you'll have an easier fight ahead of you.

If you only used one Cain to take down the Hades Cannon, this fight can be made a lot easier by using the second Cain to kill the Banshee before she gets close.

Once the Banshee is down, carefully shift the entire squad behind cover, facing the area's far right edge.

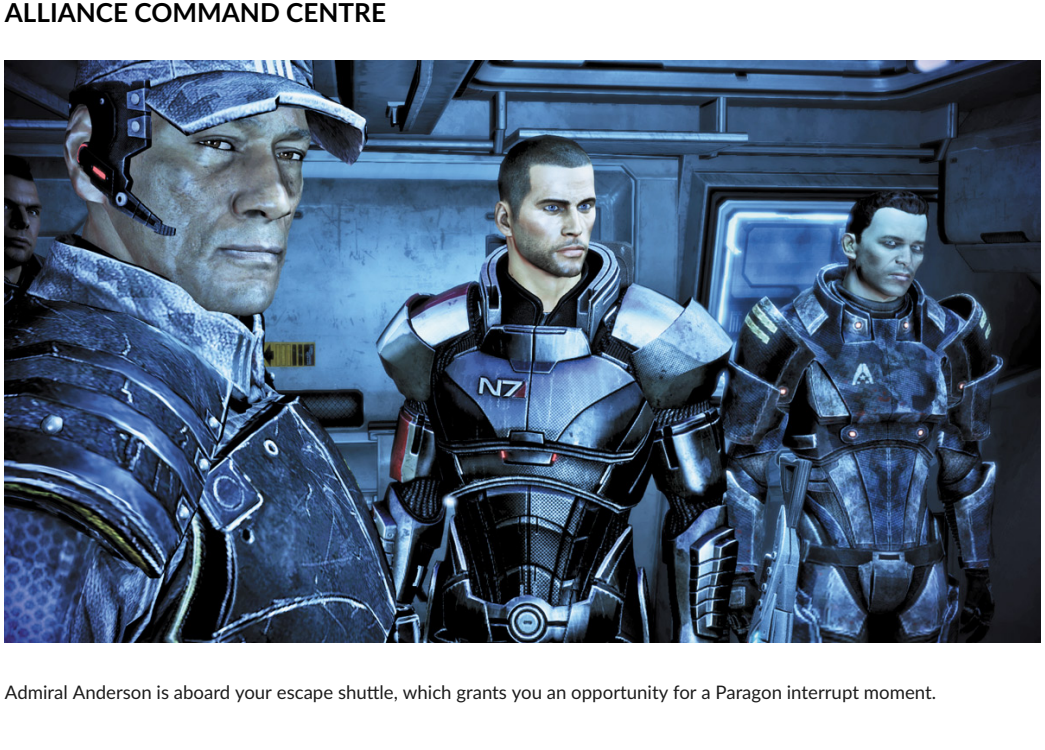
As soon as the escape shuttle arrives, hurl a grenade ahead of you to clear out some space between you and the shuttle.

If you don't have any grenades, use either a power like Nova (if you're a Vanguard) to create some room or use an explosive power combo.

Powers like Tactical Cloak or Adrenaline Rush can make it a lot easier to get through the Cannibals.

Reach the shuttle to escape, but don't take too long: The Shuttle is under fire and will be destroyed if you don't reach it in time.

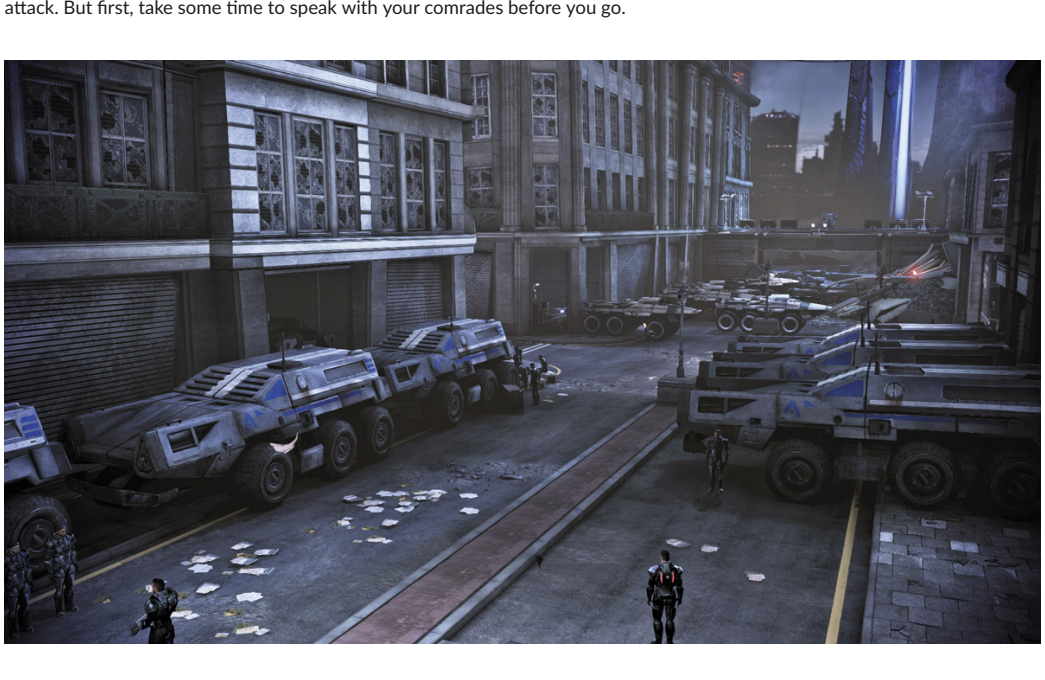
ALLIANCE COMMAND CENTRE

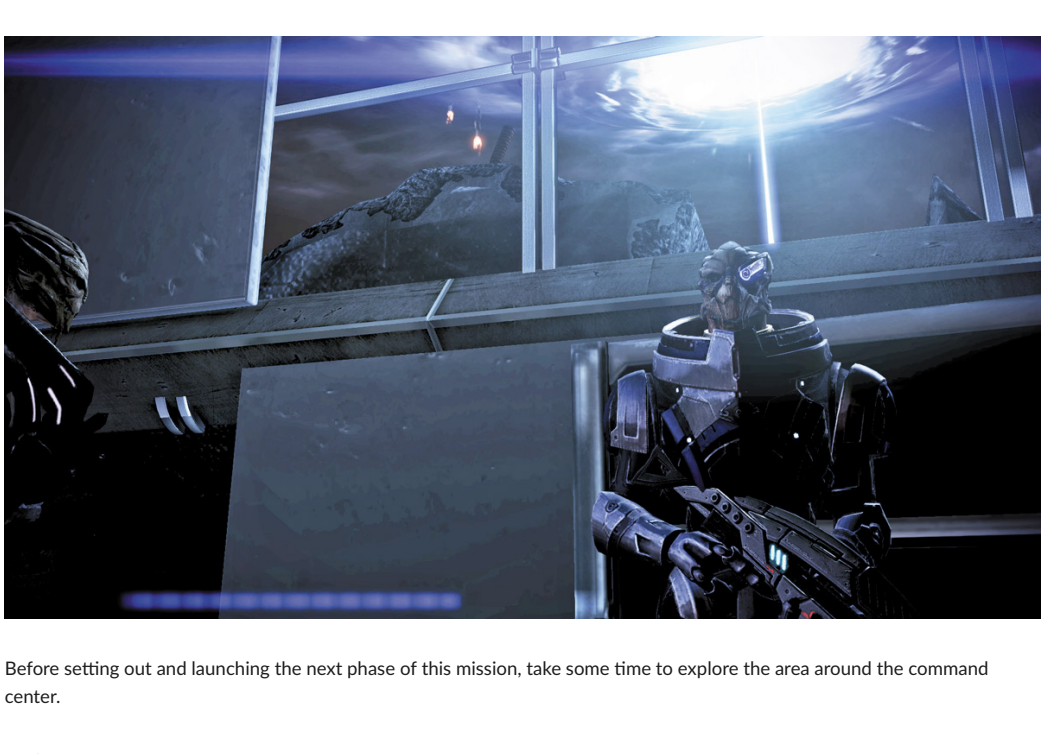


Admiral Anderson is aboard your escape shuttle, which grants you an opportunity for a Paragon interrupt moment.

You can ask the admiral about the heroism on Earth or steer the conversation directly to either a Paragon or Renegade conversation point.

The shuttle ushers you and your squad to the Alliance stronghold in London. From here you will stage the next phase of your attack. But first, take some time to speak with your comrades before you go.





Before setting out and launching the next phase of this mission, take some time to explore the area around the command center.

You'll find nearly every squad member and even some of the faces from past missions, like your krogan friend Wreav.

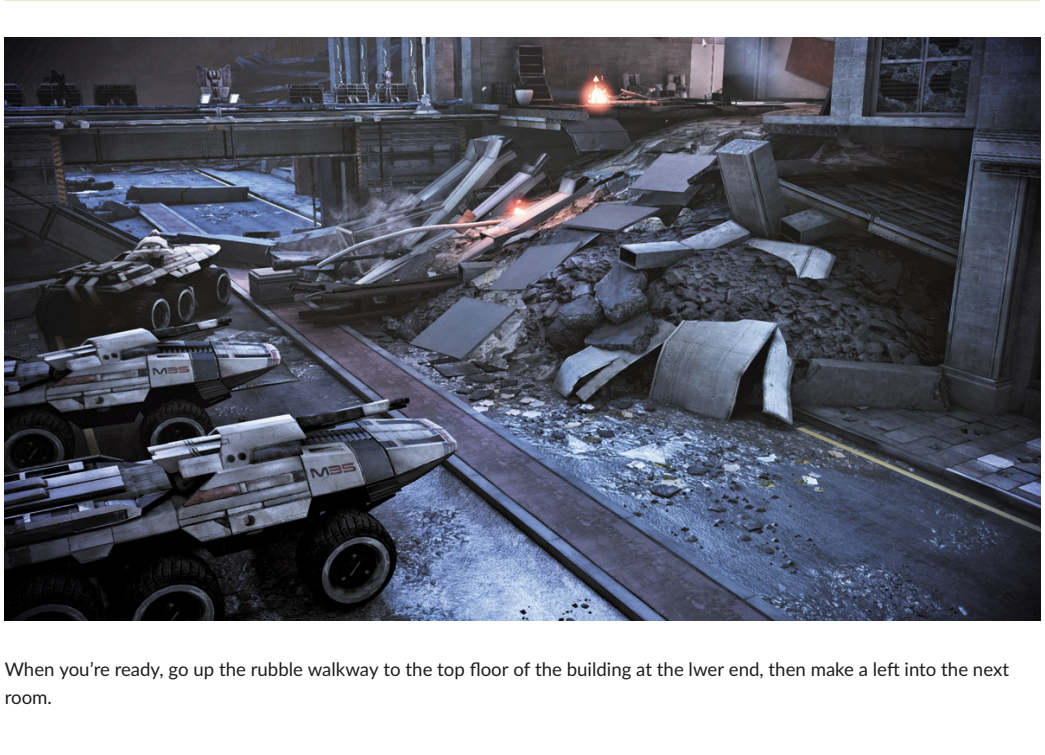
ITEM REQUISITION

Before making it all the way down the street and up the ramp of debris on the far end grab the **Data Pad** from the small room on the left in between two of the armored vehicles.

You don't have to speak with anyone before engaging in the next phase of the mission, but doing so gives you the opportunity to accrue a few more Paragon/Renegade points.

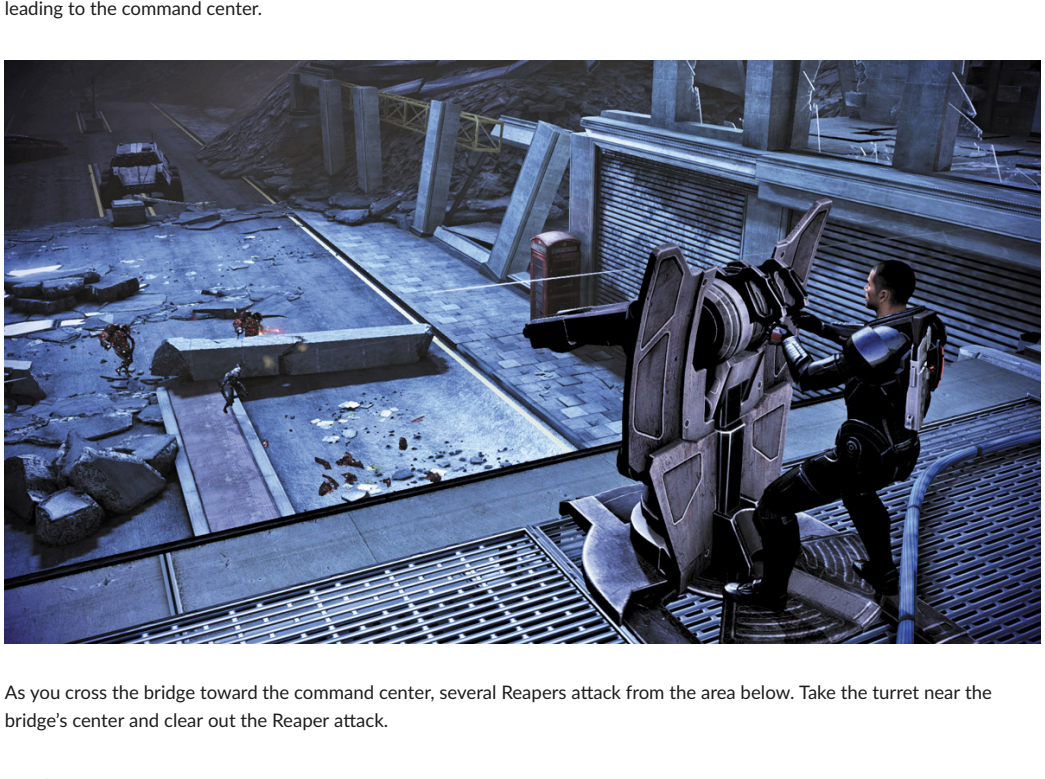
TIP

If you've engaged in a romance with any of your crew, now is also a good opportunity to speak with them one last time.



When you're ready, go up the rubble walkway to the top floor of the building at the lwer end, then make a left into the next room.

Inside you will find Primarch Victus and some of his turian men. Exit through the door on the left wall to come upon a bridge leading to the command center.

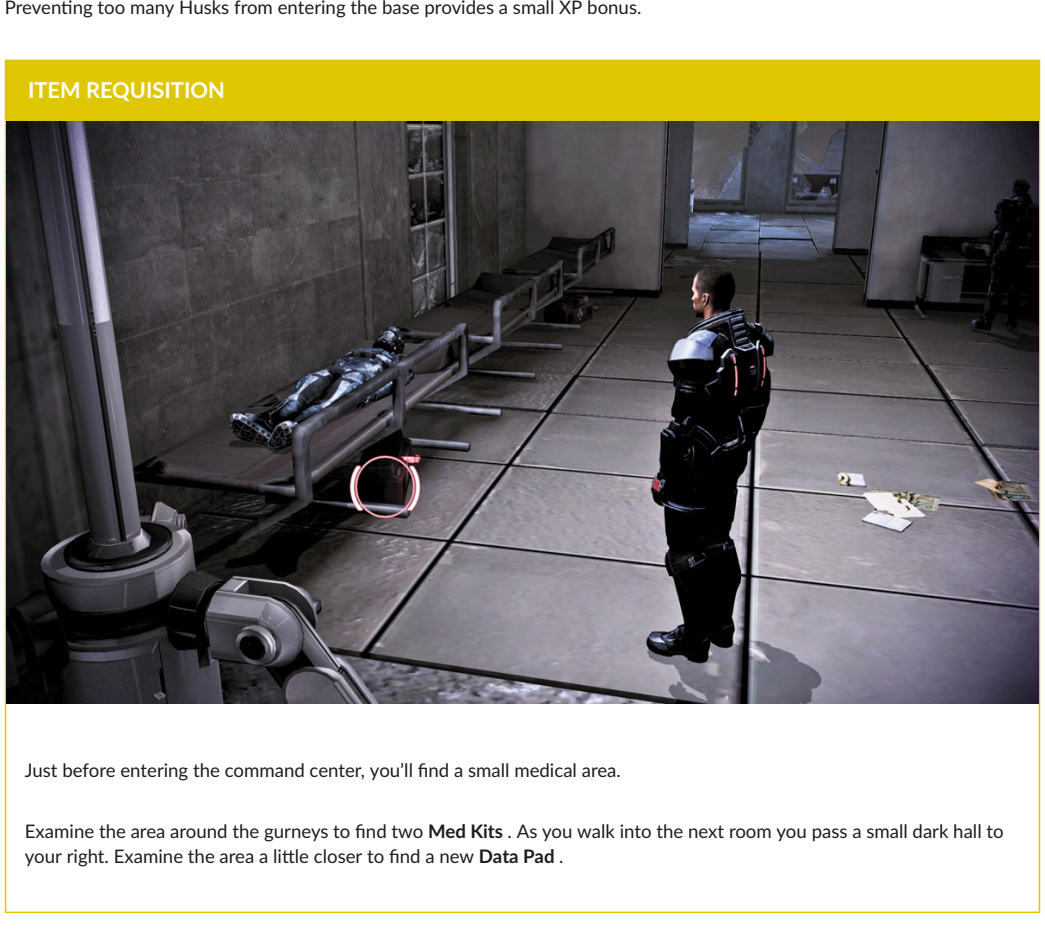


As you cross the bridge toward the command center, several Reapers attack from the area below. Take the turret near the bridge's center and clear out the Reaper attack.

They'll rush from the right and left of the long avenue below, so keep the turret moving back and forth until they stop coming.

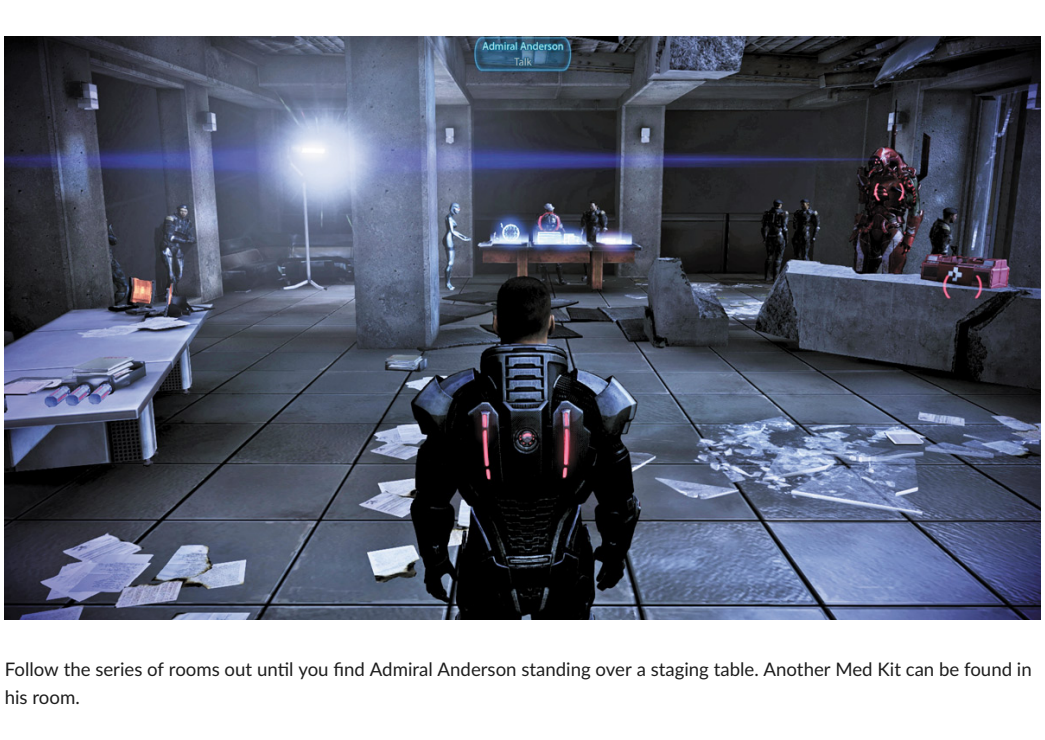
Preventing too many Husks from entering the base provides a small XP bonus.

ITEM REQUISITION



Just before entering the command center, you'll find a small medical area.

Examine the area around the gurneys to find two **Med Kits** . As you walk into the next room you pass a small dark hall to your right. Examine the area a little closer to find a new **Data Pad** .

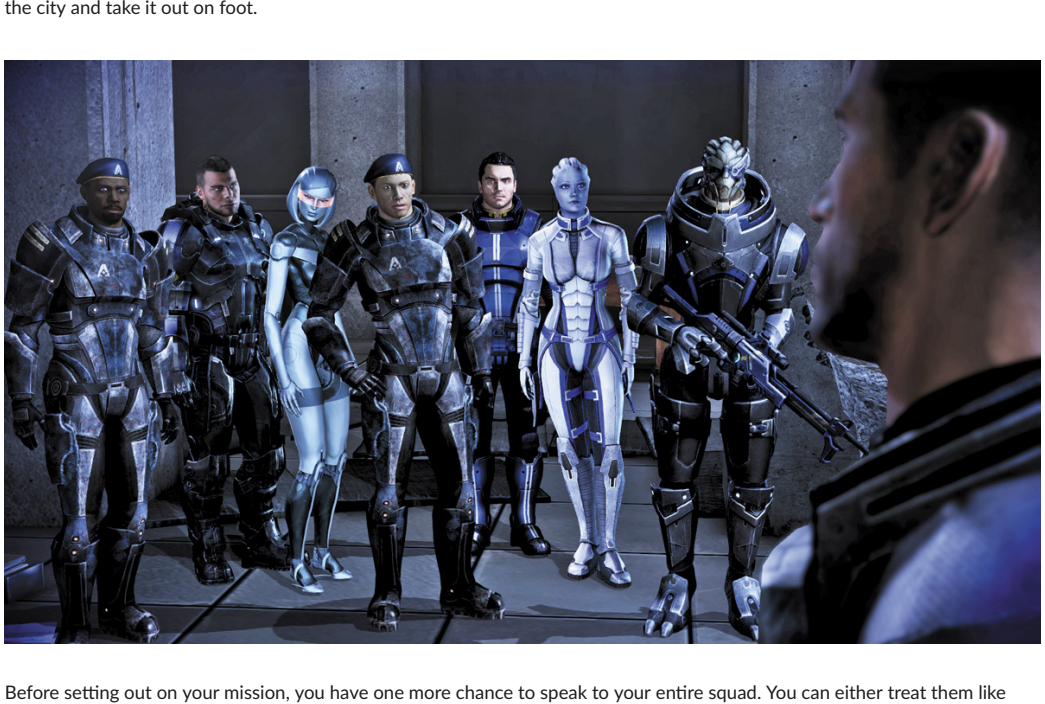


Follow the series of rooms out until you find Admiral Anderson standing over a staging table. Another Med Kit can be found in his room.

Speak with him to trigger the final speech before the mission. Despite missing the bulk of the forces expected, the mission is still a go.

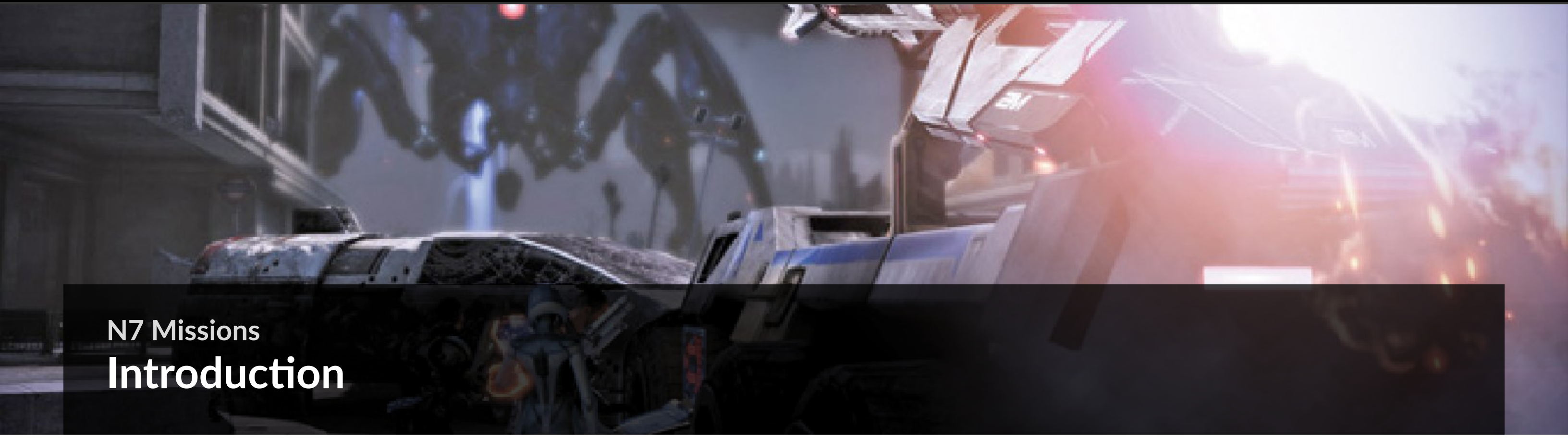
The battalion leaders gather around the table and listen to the mission briefing.

The beam leading to the Citadel is guarded by a Reaper Destroyer. The only way to reach it is to cross No-Man's-Land across the city and take it out on foot.



Before setting out on your mission, you have one more chance to speak to your entire squad. You can either treat them like friends and comrades or talk to them like your soldiers.

Your next few dialogue choices will gain you a few Reputation points. At your speech's end, you can select your squadmates and prepare for the final mission.



N7 Missions

Introduction

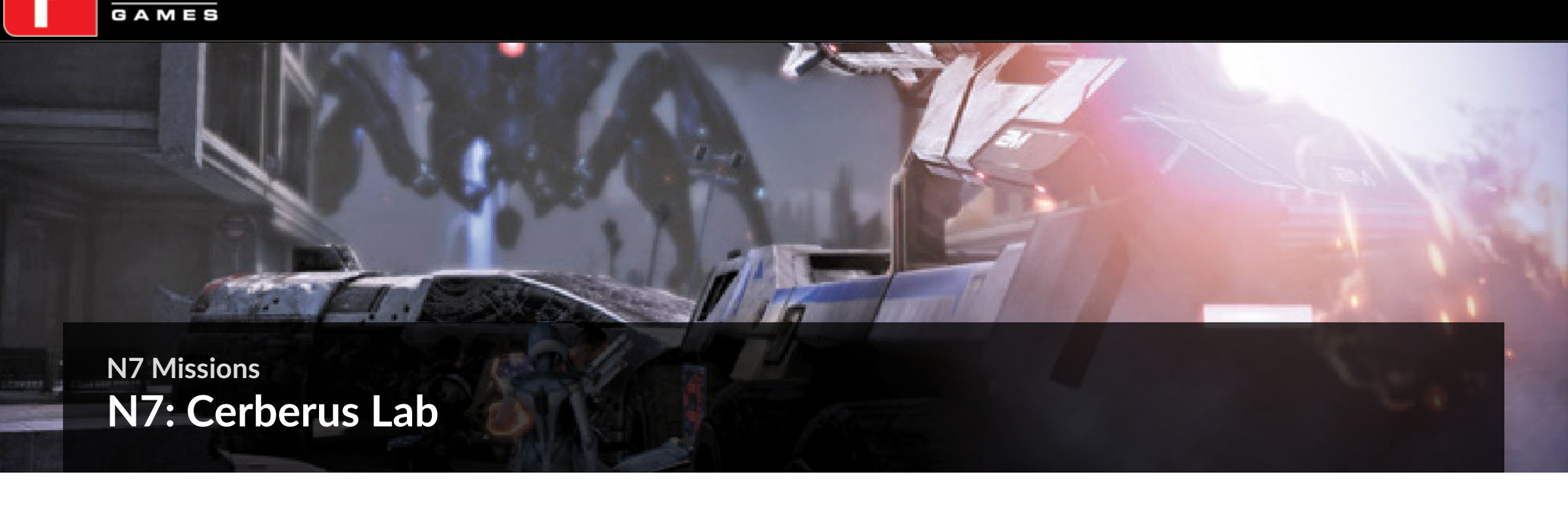
N7 Missions are not quite as extensive as some of the optional story missions offered throughout the game, but they do provide additional means to strengthen your squad through experience earned for accomplishing these objectives and the variety of weapon and armor mods you can acquire during these sorties.

Additionally, several Citadel side quests can only be started or completed by hitting these locations and lifting key items from them. You can also acquire improved Was Assets by finishing these missions.

N7 Missions can also serve as a Primer for *Mass Effect 3* multiplayer, as every mission takes place in a map that is also used for the cooperative battles.

CAUTION

Like with any mission in the game, there's no going back to these locations once you've completed the assignment, short of reloading your save or starting a new game. Be as thorough as possible when searching the environment.



N7 Missions

N7: Cerberus Lab

As soon as you're given control of the Normandy following your unsuccessful attempt to rally reinforcements for Earth, Admiral Hackett sends you an e-mail regarding a hidden Cerberus facility in the Sigurd's Cradle star cluster, on the planet Sanctum.

Intelligence suggests that the Illusive Man's scientists have been performing experiments with captured Reaper technology, and the Alliance wants you to throw a wrench in their plans.

You need to deploy a strike team to the lab, steal the tech, and escape before Cerberus reinforcements overwhelm you.

MISSION BREIFING

Availability: In "Priority: Palaven"

Location: Sigurd's Cradle—Sanctum

Battlegrounds: The Cerberus facility is small enough that close-quarters combat is inevitable.

Cerberus forces can arrive from above throughout most of the lab, and the majority of the objective locations have multiple points of access.

You can find yourself encircled very quickly by Assault Troopers and Centurions.

Guardians can also be frustrating here, as they can suddenly appear on your flanks and block escape routes or provide cover for other hostiles.

When Combat Engineers are thrown into the fray, be extremely mindful of your positioning.

The tight quarters in the lab's upper and lower levels can trap you in a killbox where a deployed turret has superior position over you and your team.

Fortunately, the lab's circuitous nature can also work in your favor.

If one way to the objective is heavily defended, you can leave a squadmate behind to hold the enemy's attention, preferably someone suited to tanking heavy damage, while you and the other squadmate perform your own pincer attack on the enemy.

As soon as you disturb a piece of tech defended by Cerberus, waves of reinforcements begin to arrive.

It's here that you'll want to work as quickly as possible at killing the enemy.

You don't want to be surrounded, and as soon as you kill a certain number of hostiles, the next objective waypoint will appear, and the process begins again.

Consequence Overview: There are no Paragon or Renegade decisions for this mission, but you have a chance to earn some extra Reputation upon completion.

Cerberus also has been performing some Medi-Gel research at this facility; the results, while considered a failure by the terrorists, might be of use to a doctor at Huerta Memorial Hospital on the Citadel.

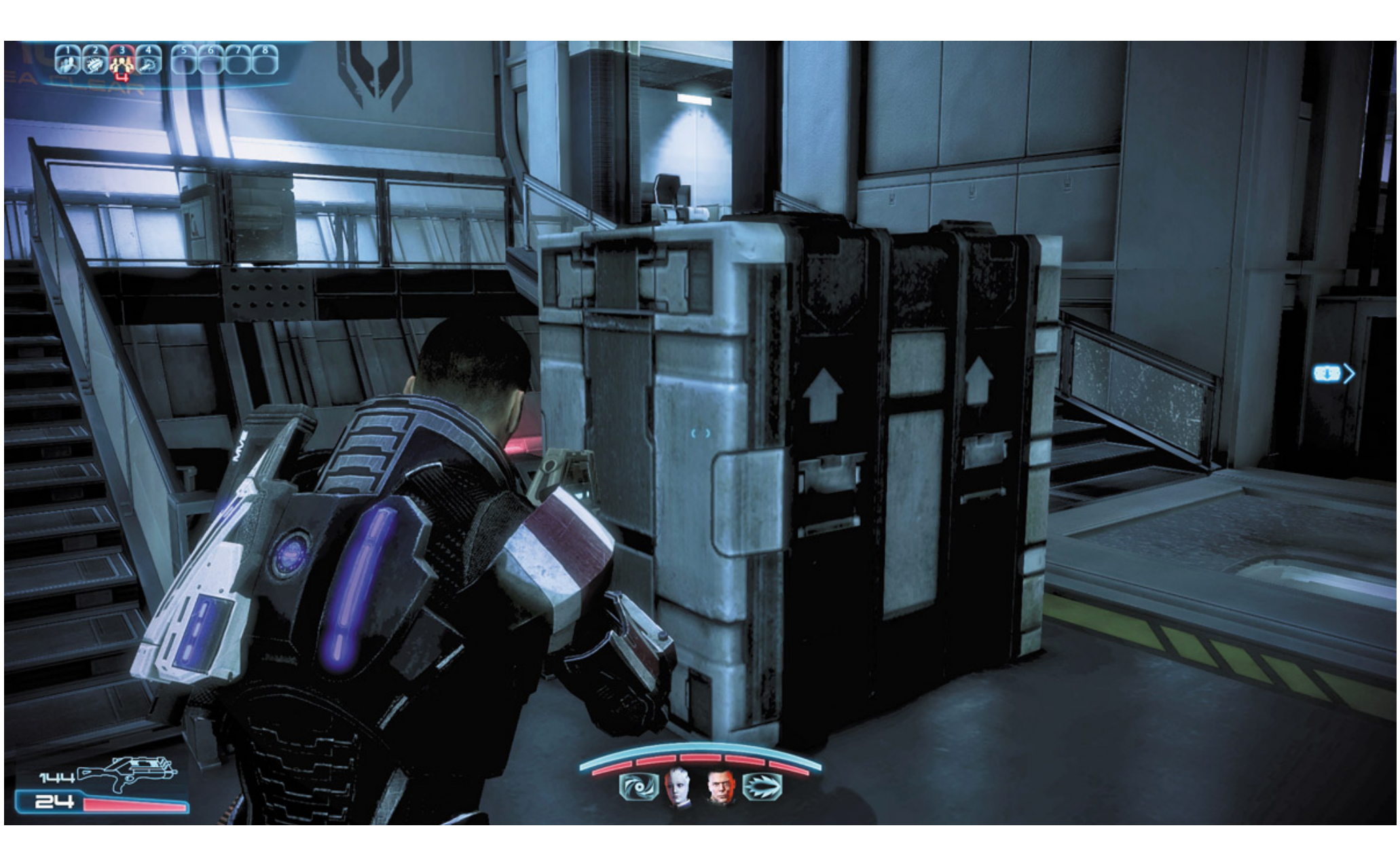
NOTE

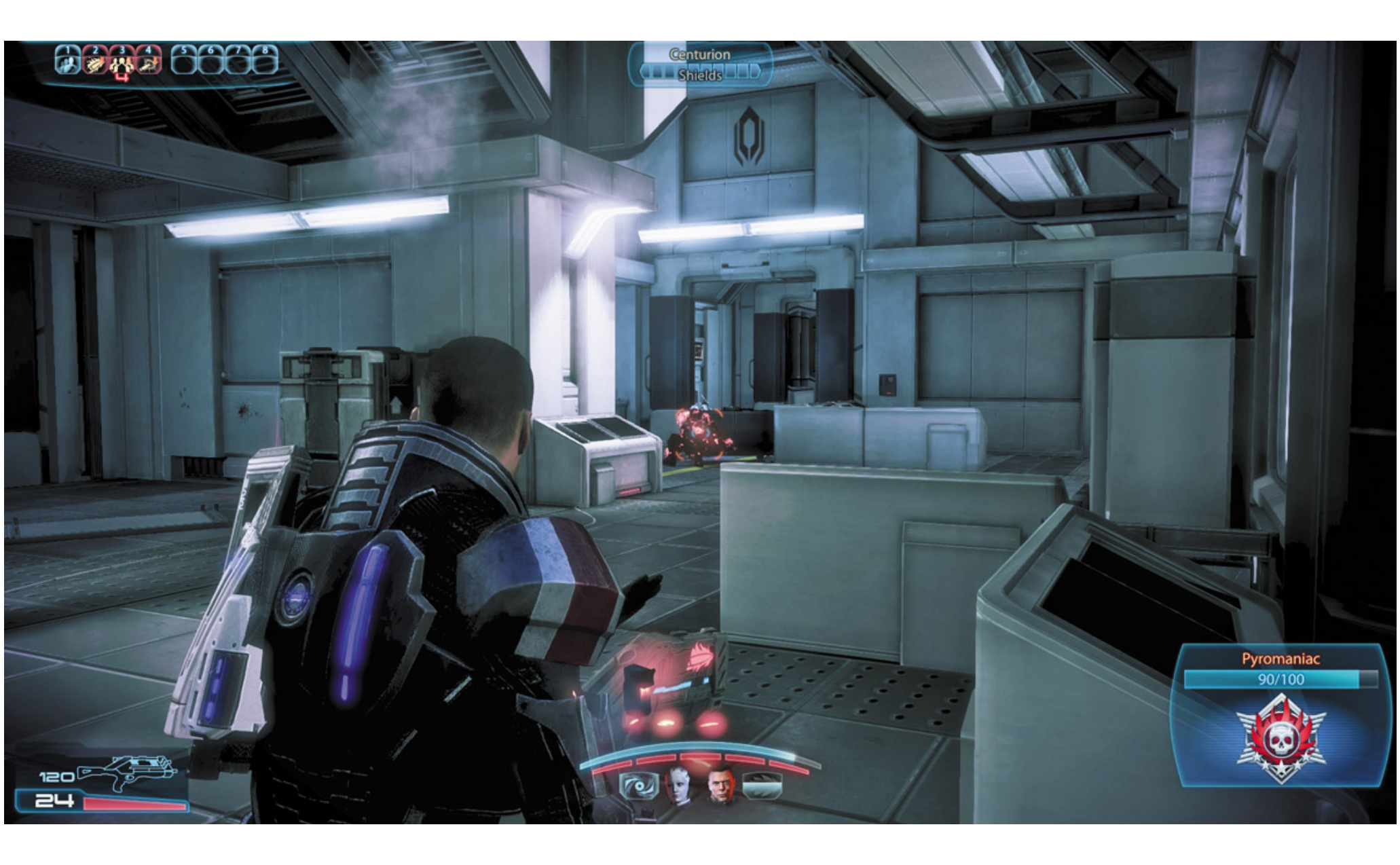
This Cerberus facility reappears in the multiplayer mode as the map named Glacier.

ITEM REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Credits: 3,000 (x2); 4000	Failed Medi-Gel Experiment (see *Citadel: Alien Medi-Gel Formula)*
Medi-Gel	Sniper Rifle Enhanced Scope

INSERTION

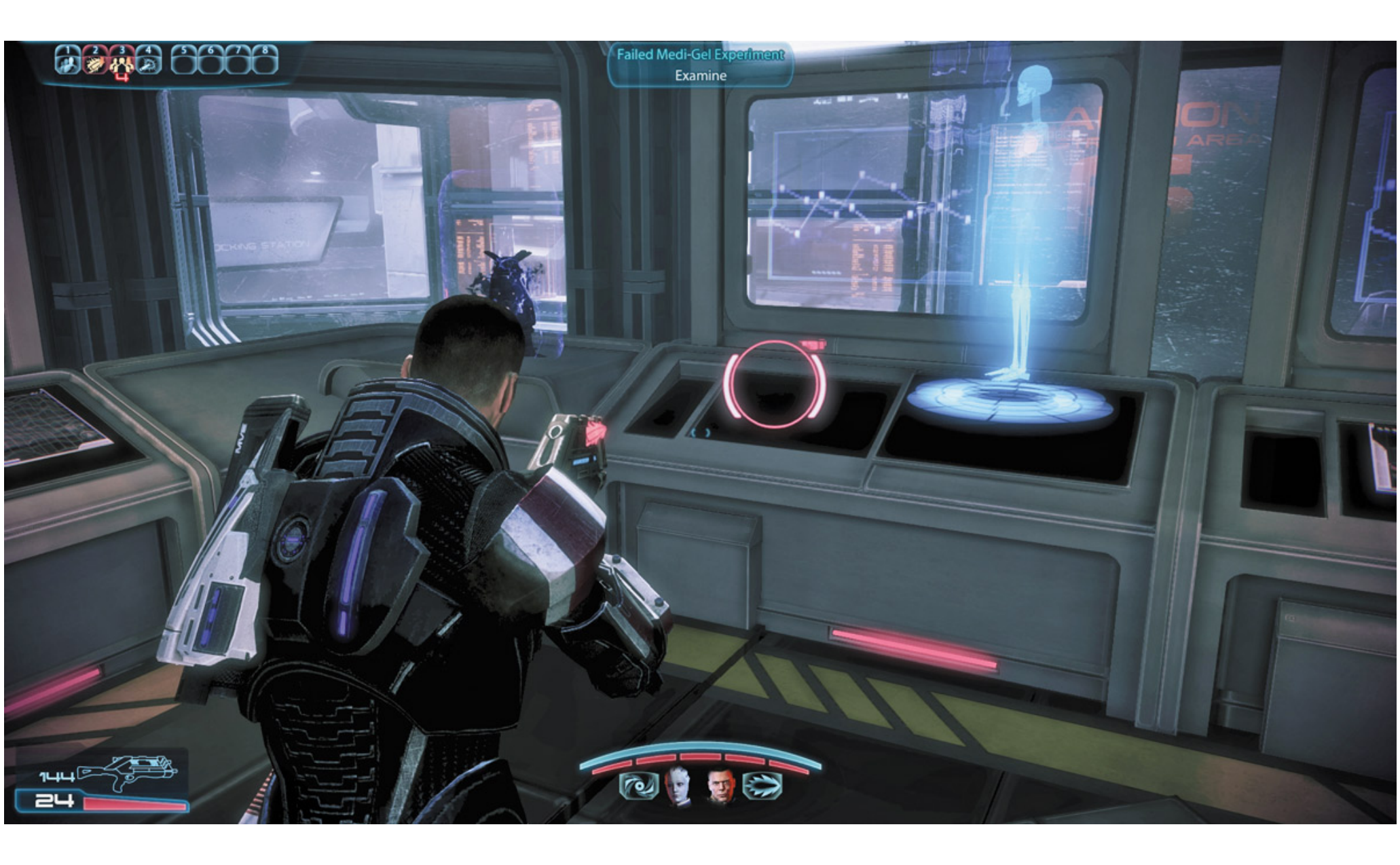




The landing at the facility is fairly uneventful. You start on a landing pad that is filled with various shipping containers, but the enemy has not yet reacted to your presence.

Cortez pulls the shuttle away once the team is deployed and provides the first objective waypoint. There are two major routes to the Reaper Artifact.

Take the ramps to the left of your starting position and enter the labs from there. You can immediately surprise Cerberus troops while having plenty of cover and room to maneuver.



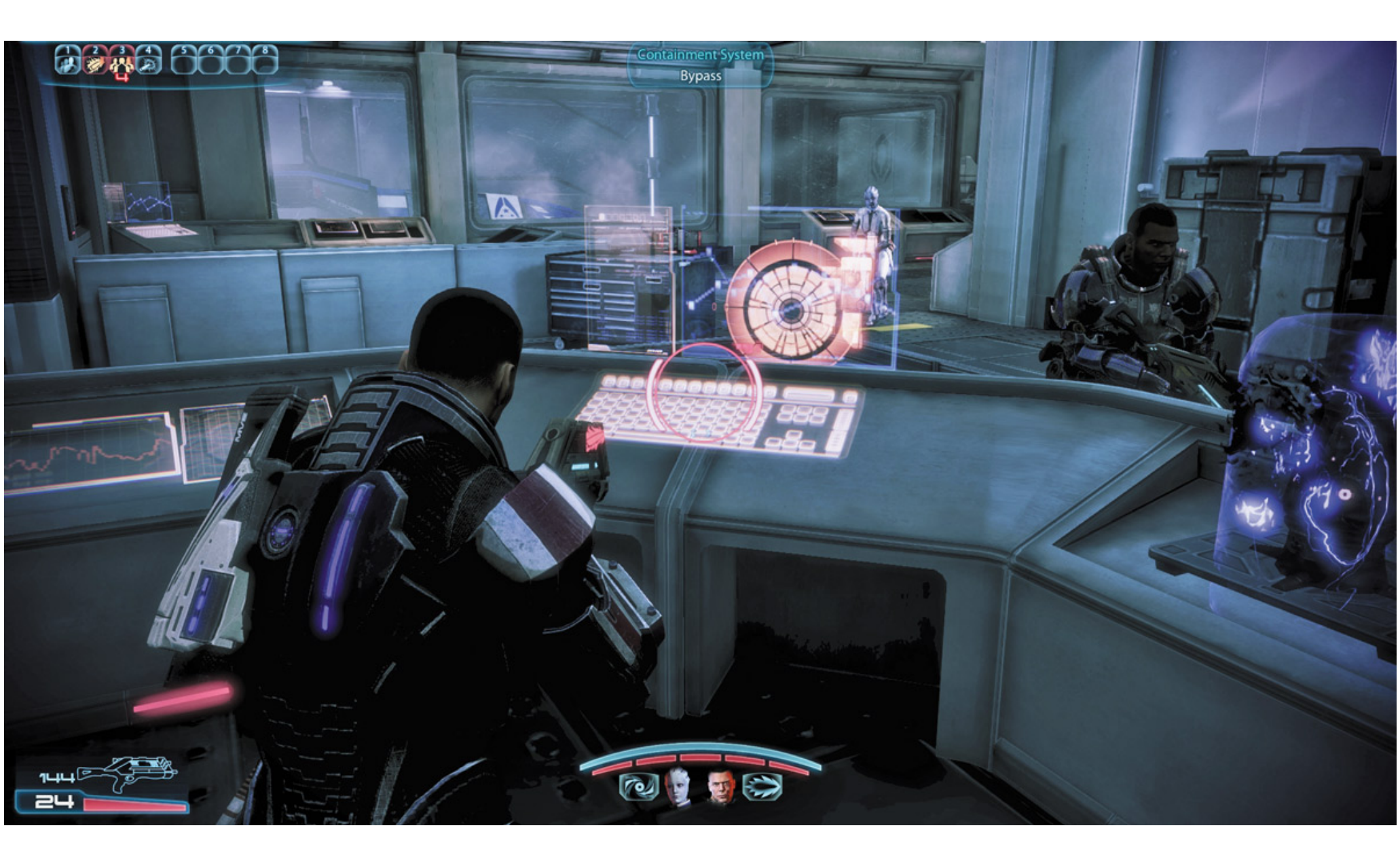
Failed Medi-Gel Experiment console

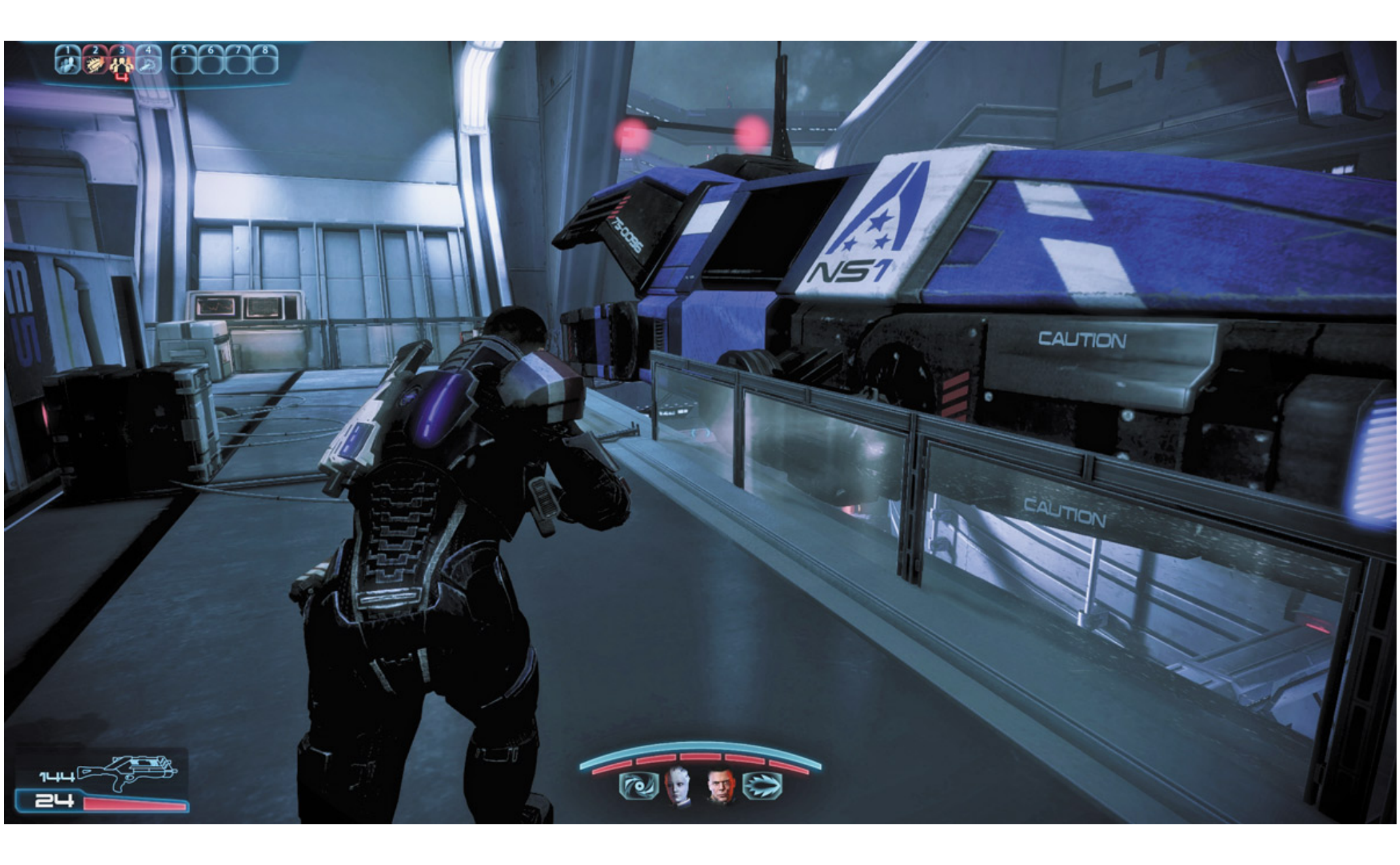
Once the initial group of Cerberus operatives is dead, scour the entire facility until you've found everything listed in the Items Requisition Rundown, including the Failed Medi-Gel Experiment, as you'll not have a chance to return to this facility as Shepard.

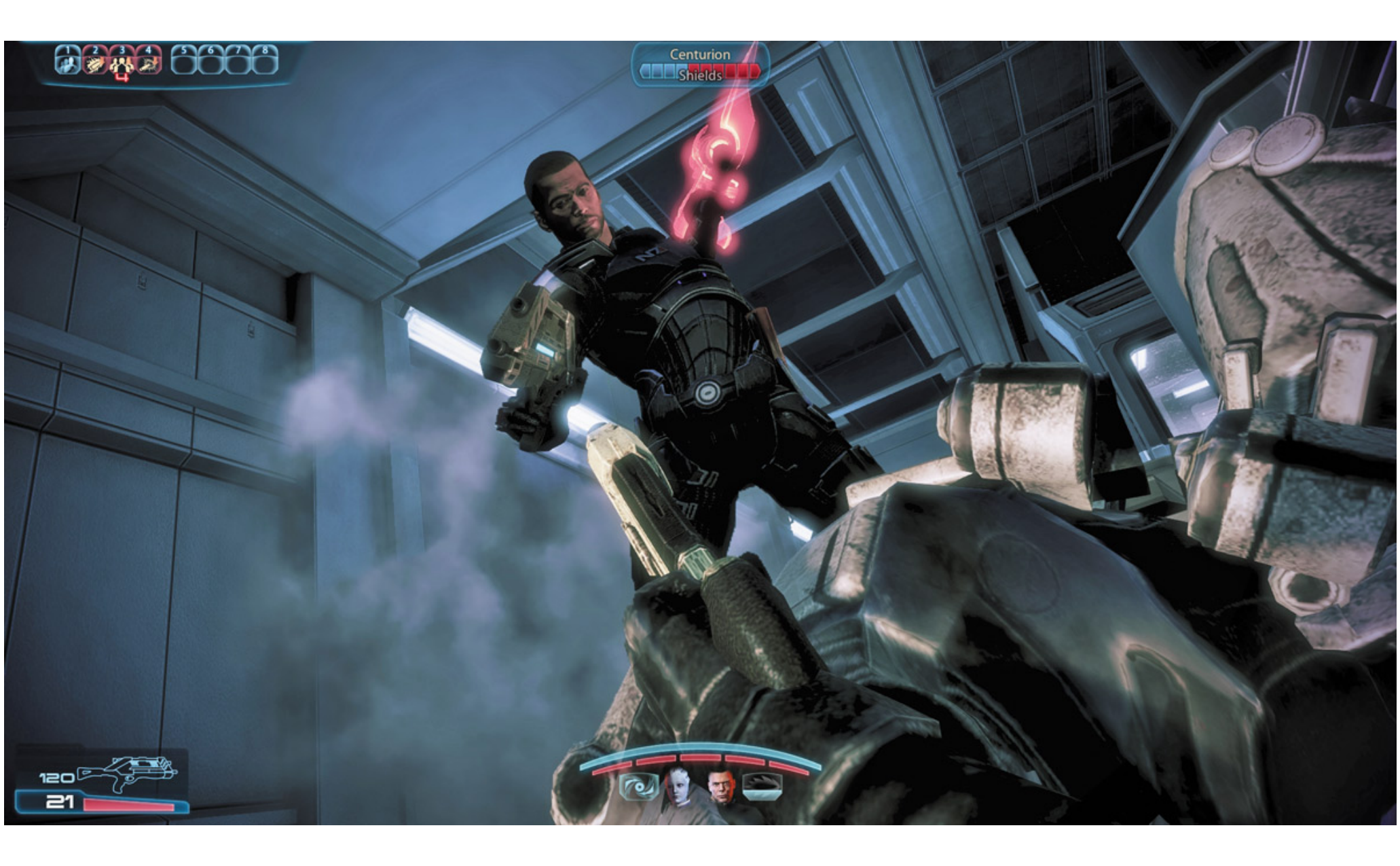
Until you actually disable the security protecting the Reaper Artifact, you'll have free run of the labs.

A few of the computer terminals reveal some disturbing information about how Cerberus has adapted Reaper Indoctrination for molding their soldiers for complete obedience.

THE FIRST ARTIFACT





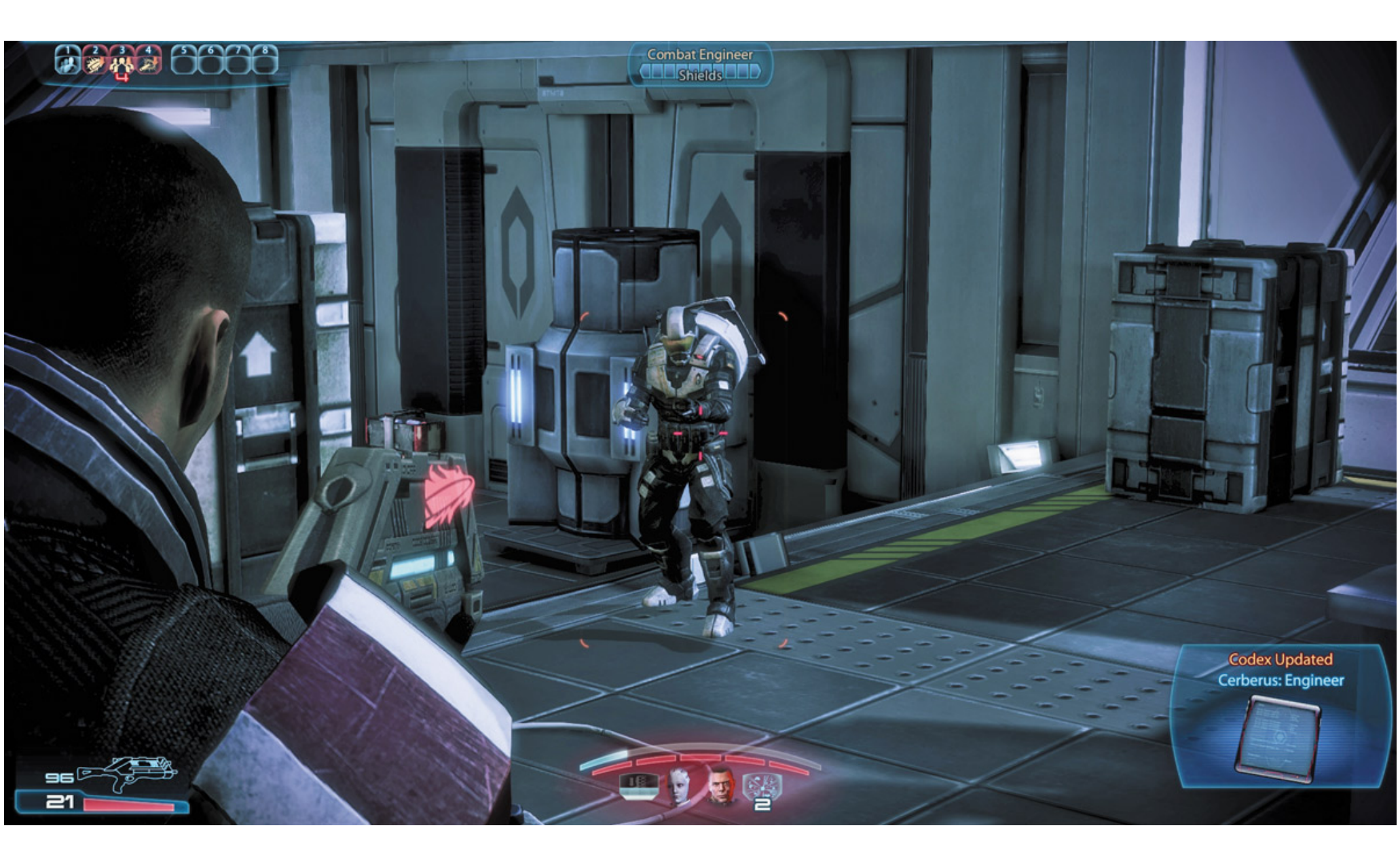


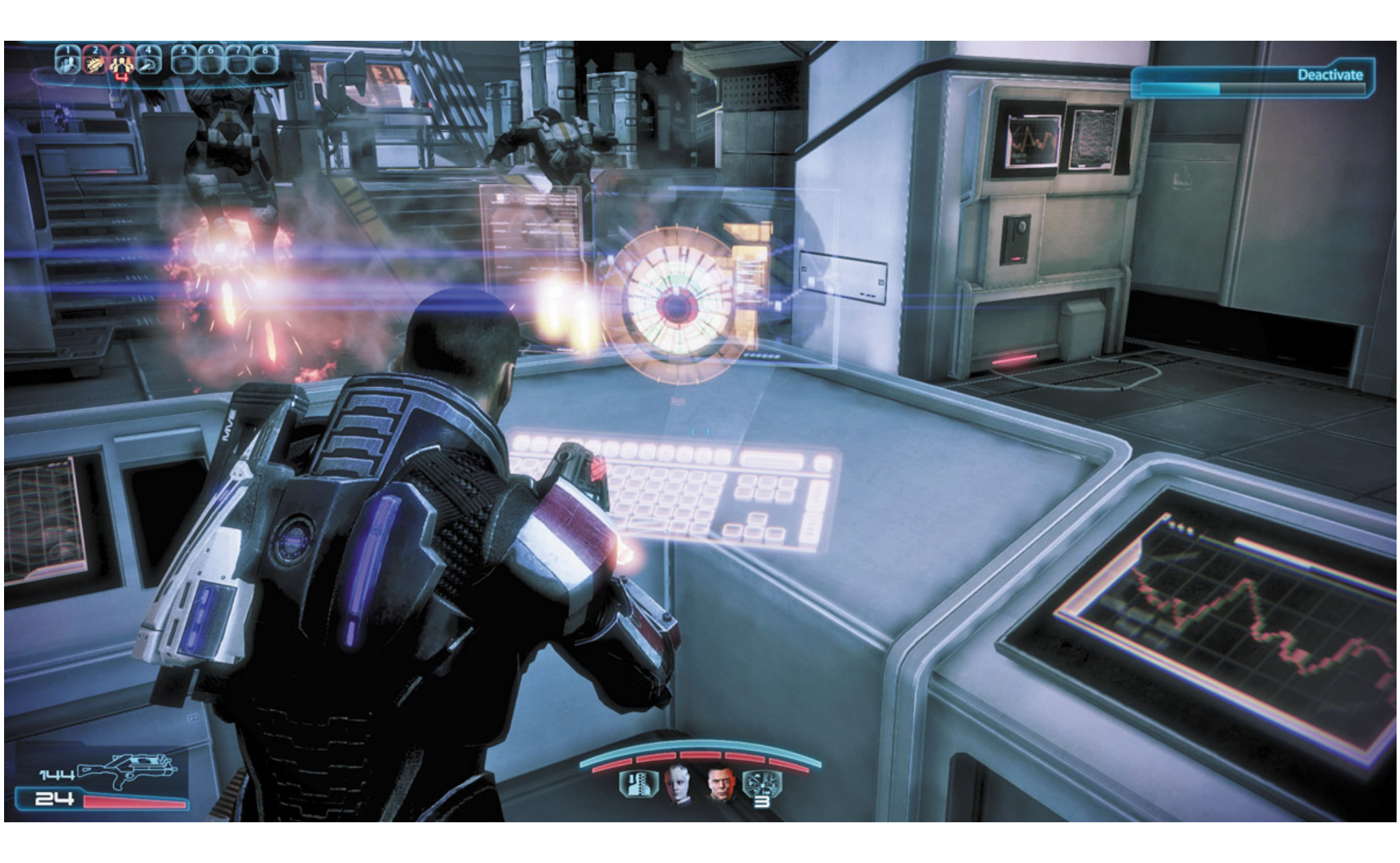
Once you locate all of the credits and items, get to the control panel for the first Reaper Artifact and disable it.

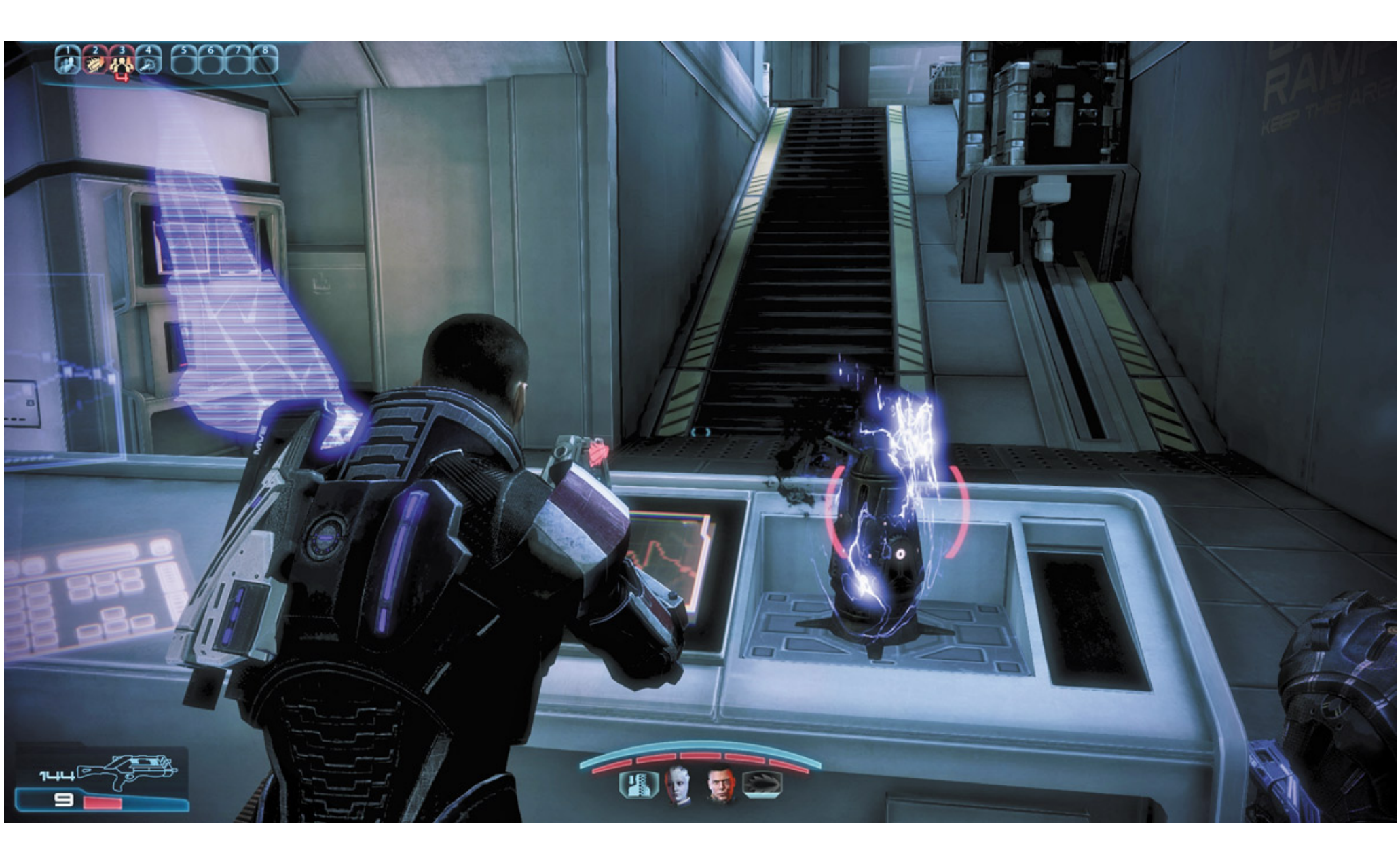
Collect the artifact, and run back to the landing pad to rendezvous with Cortez. Once you drop off the artifact, the pilot will mark a second artifact in the base's lower levels.

This will also cause another wave of Cerberus troops to enter the base. Fight your way to the next artifact, and be prepared for stiffer resistance from Cerberus.

THE SECOND ARTIFACT





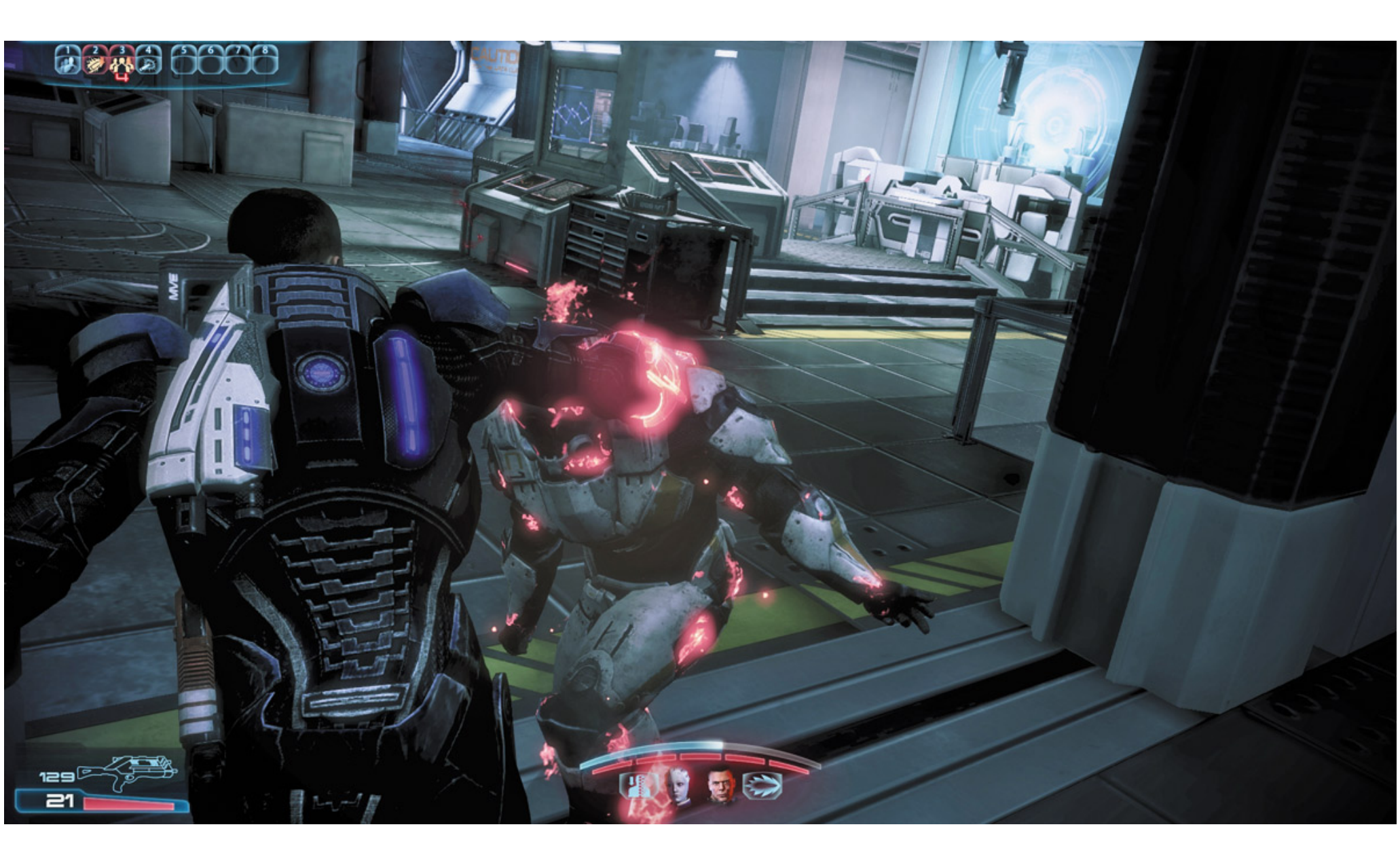


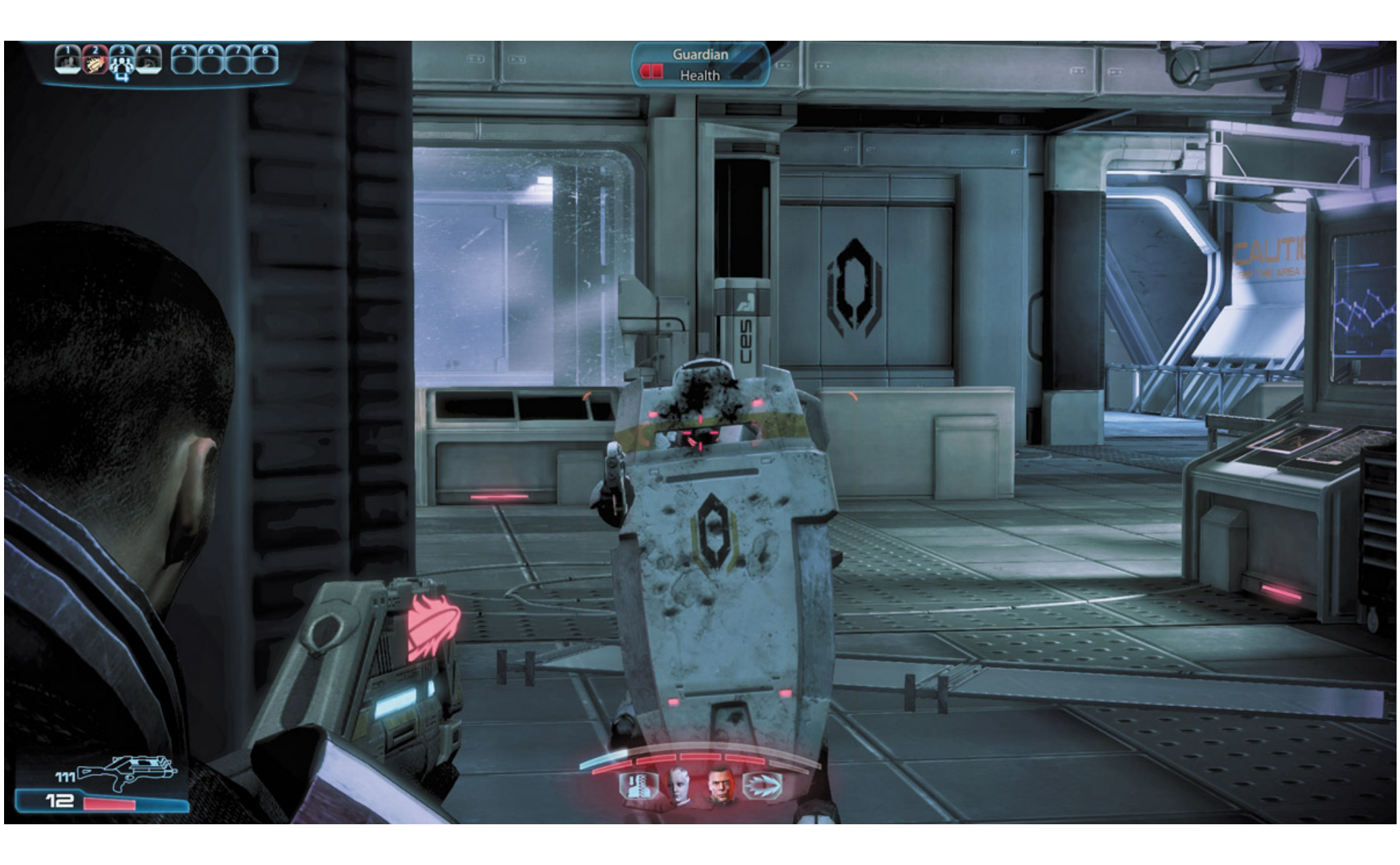
Expect to see Combat Engineers join the Assault Troopers and Centurions you've been facing thus far on the way to the second artifact.

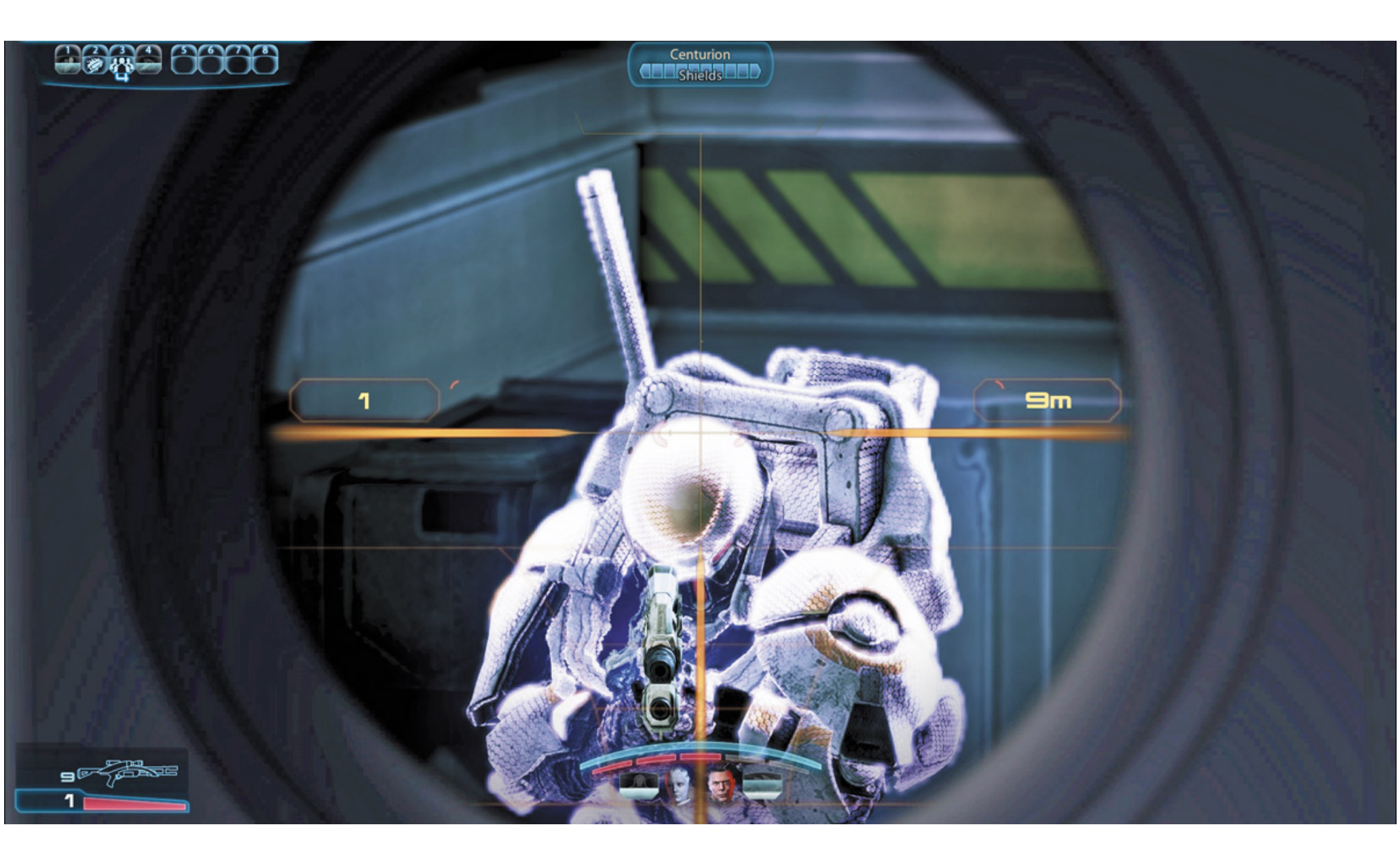
The close quarters you're fighting in makes them priority targets, as their turrets can make brutally short work of you.

As you deactivate the security for the second artifact, troops begin to drop in literally right next to you. Your squad should engage them before they finish deploying.

COMPLICATIONS







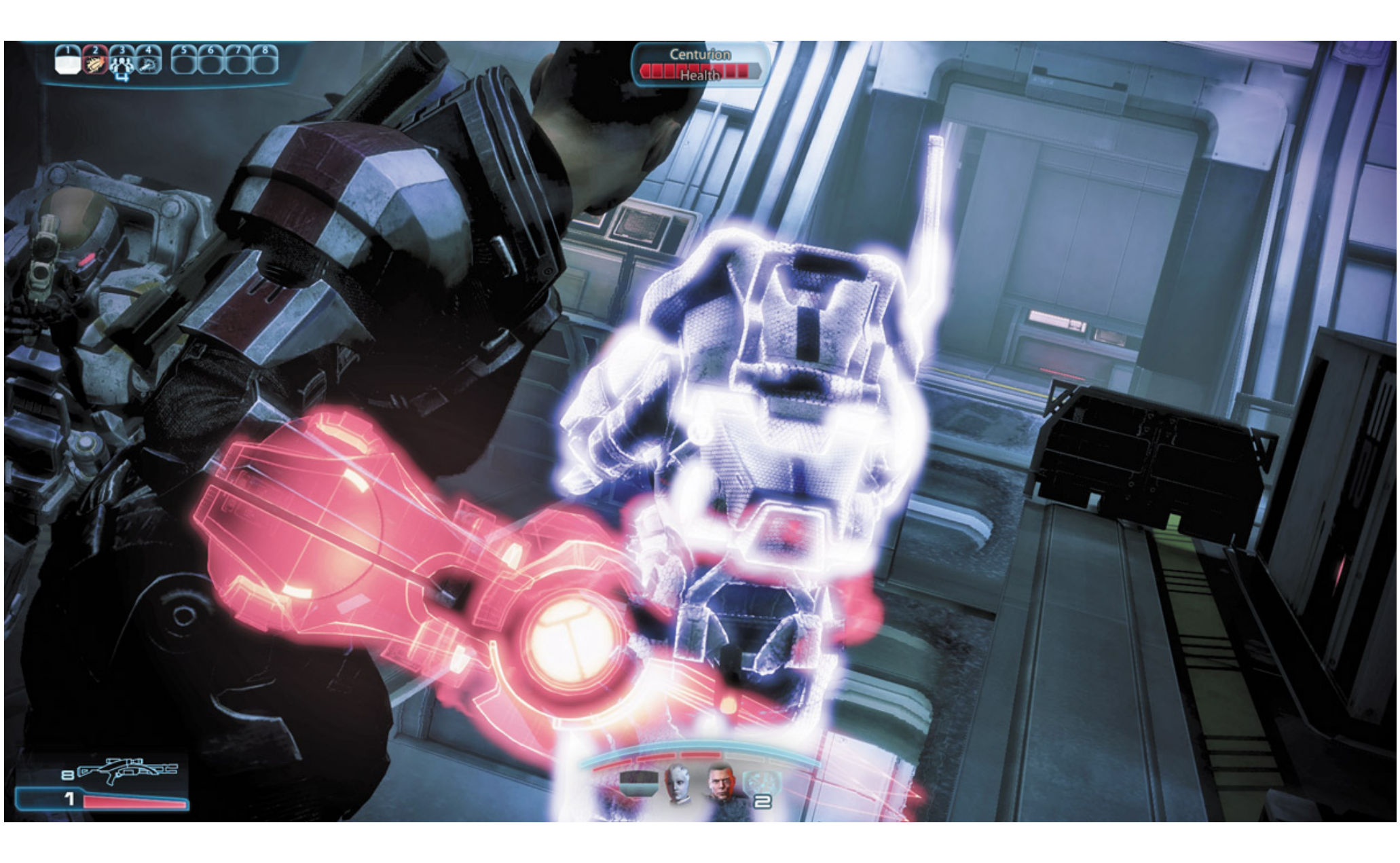
Cerberus fighters begin to harass the shuttle, making safe extraction impossible. You'll have to hold off waves of Cerberus troops while Cortez tries to lose his pursuers.

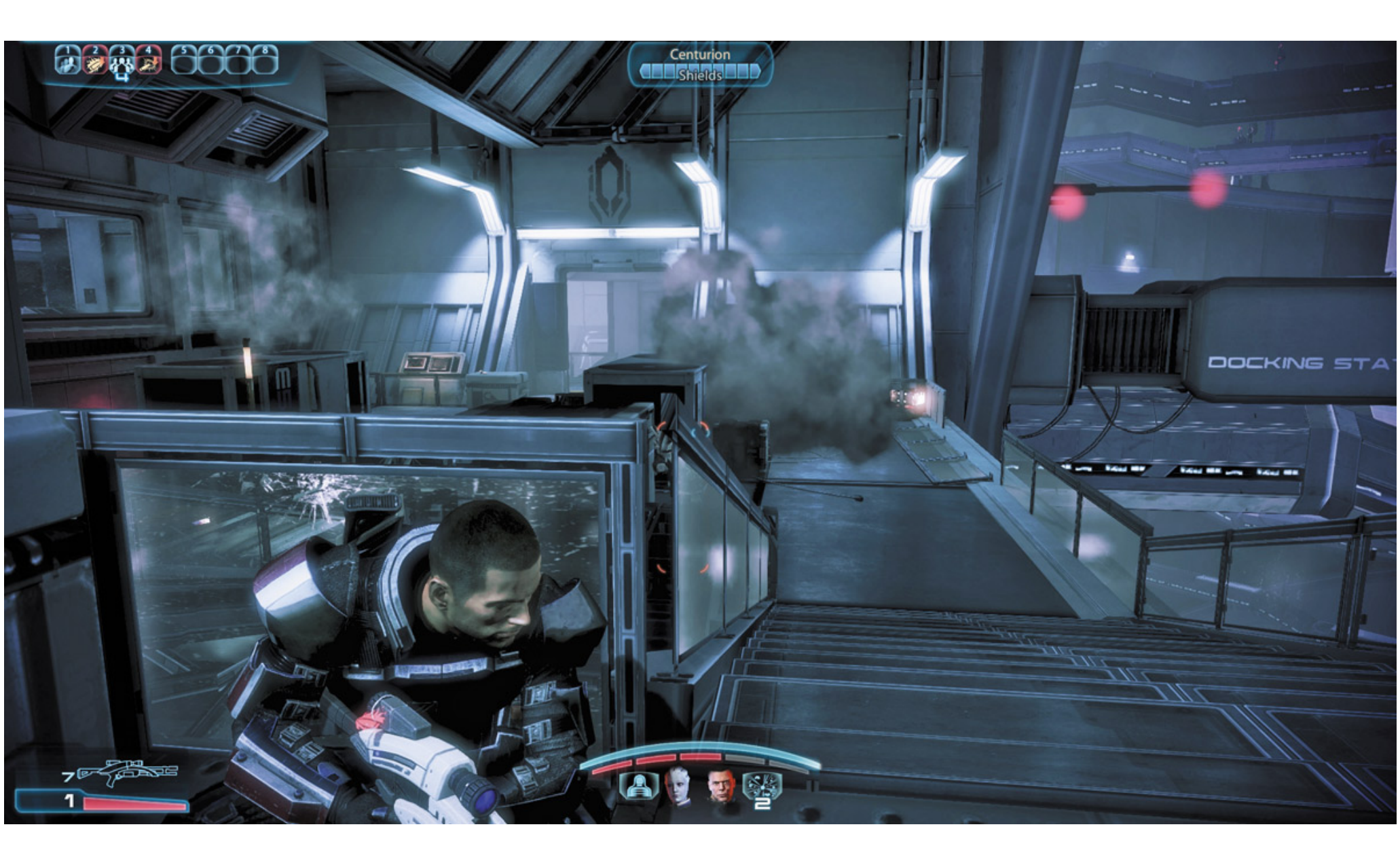
A good strategy is to find a location where cover is available for the whole squad, and try to limit the number of flanking routes the enemy can use to get to you.

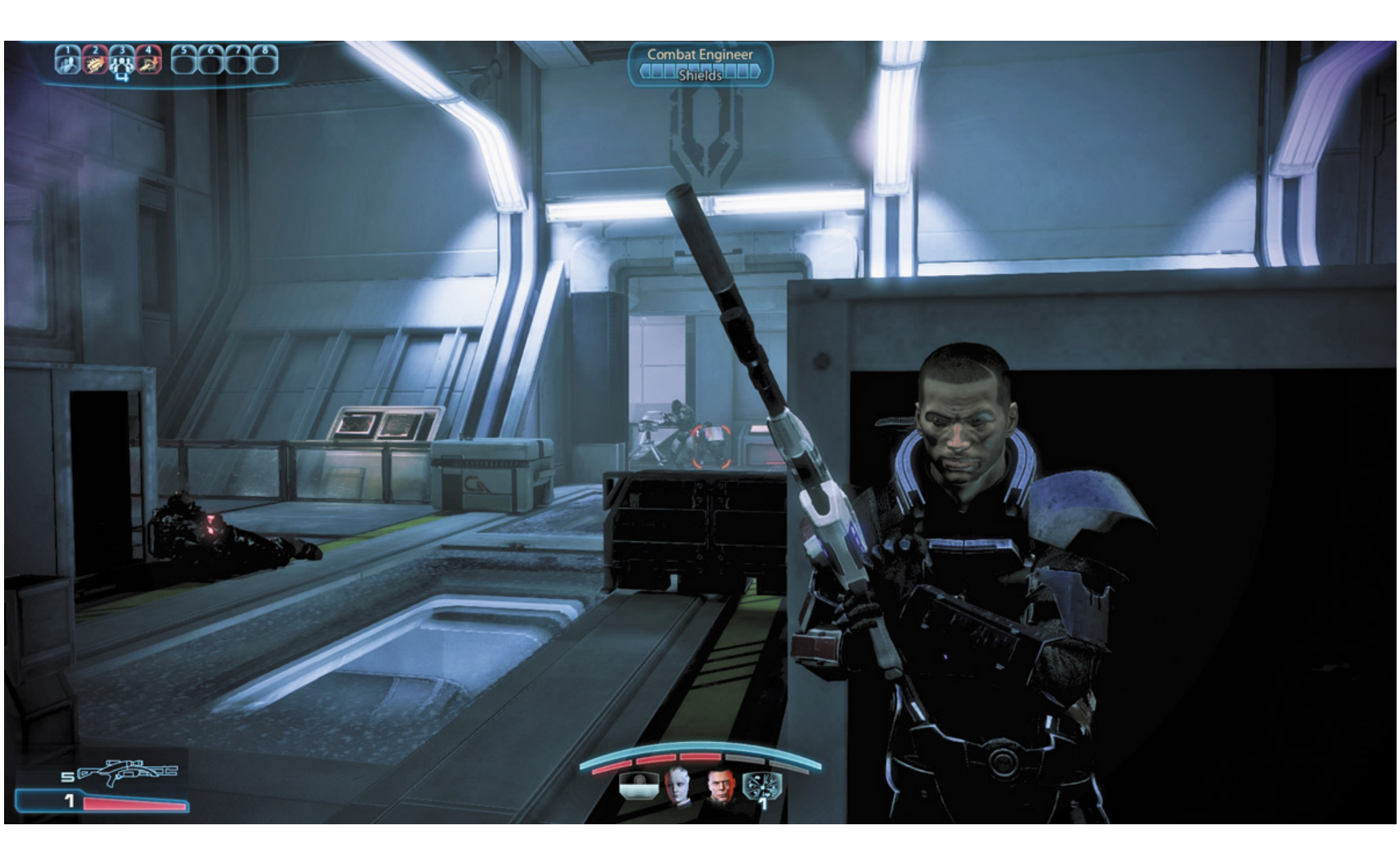
Guardians will join the enemy reinforcements. Prepare to flank them with your squadmates, or snipe them through the view slots of their shields.

If Liara is in your team, Stasis is invaluable for lining up headshots.

EXTRACTION





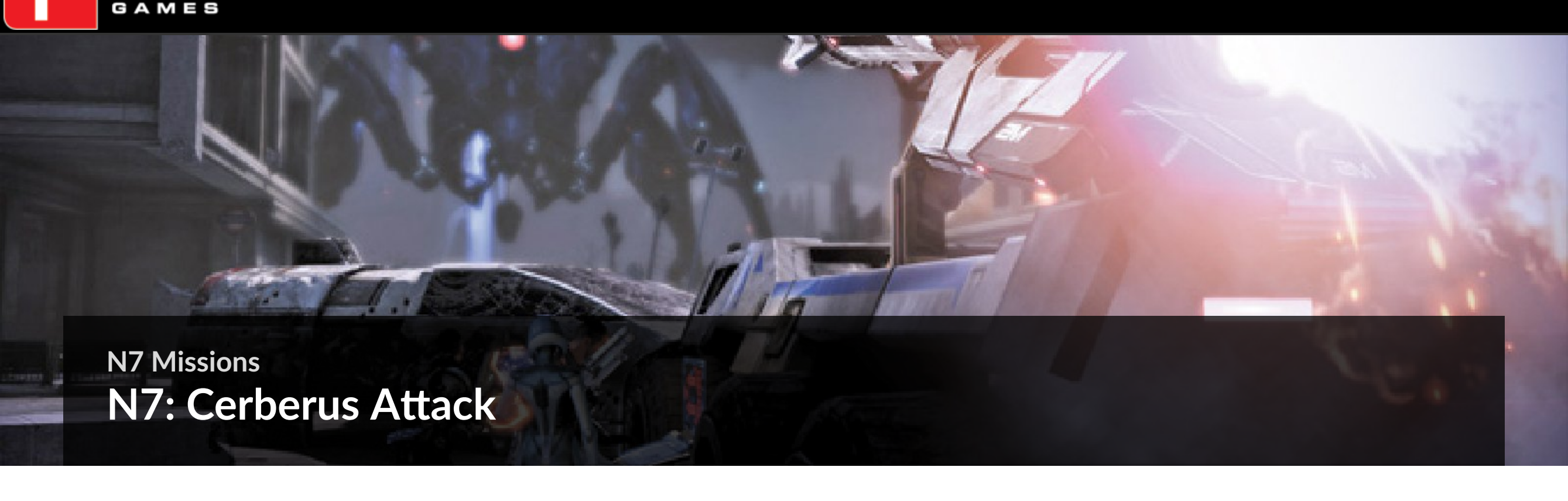


Eventually, Cortez radios in to the team, explaining that he has an opening to pick you up, but he needs you on the landing pad to fight off Cerberus troops.

By the time you get there, Cerberus will likely be there in force. Try to approach from the upper floor labs, and use the height difference to your favor, funneling enemy troops up the ramps toward you.

Combat Engineers will set up turrets on the landing pad, so make sure the pad is free of those before committing you or any squadmates down to the pad.

If you're a bit more aggressive, use the boxes on the pad for cover and be vigilant for any flanking attempts. Once you've killed several Cerberus troops, the shuttle will arrive. Interact with it to complete the mission.



N7 Missions

N7: Cerberus Attack

Cerberus has a vested interest in stopping your attempt to get krogan support for the turians on Palaven.

They've taken control of a massive, defunct ground-to-space cannon array on the krogan homeworld of Tuchanka and have found a way to make it operational again.

Cerberus is now using the cannons to clear a path for an inbound ship to bomb the krogan resistance.

Taking back the cannons and shooting down the Cerberus vessel would keep the resistance in the fight, while also throwing a wrench in Cerberus's plans.

MISSION BRIEFING

Availability: In "Tuchanka: Turian Platoon"

Location: Krogan DMZ—Tuchanka

Battlegrounds: One of the largest locations for an N7 mission, the center of the facility is a relatively open space, dotted with cover.

Passing over it is a set of pipes that Cerberus troops like to retreat to if given the chance; the Nemesis snipers in particular abuse this unreachable vantage point on careless Shepards.

This central yard is typically not the safest route to any other location in the facility, but it can be the fastest.

Surrounding the central area are a series of smaller, tighter rooms and passages. The team starts off near a blasted out bunker, which leads to a side passage connected to the lower areas.

On the opposite side of the base is the cannon control room, which is what you must secure.

It's at a higher elevation from the rest of the map, has easily controllable choke points, and has a good view of the entire central courtyard.

On lower difficulties, it might be easy to just plow through the massive exterior space to reach your next destination, but it is definitely safer to take advantage of the side passages between the bunker and control room, if only to deny snipers the use of the pipe-sniping position.

Check out the control room thoroughly. There are some turret schematics located in this mission that might be useful to a woman outside of Purgatory.

Consequence Overview: There are no Paragon or Renegade decisions for this mission, but you do gain some Reputation and a nice chunk of credits.

Don't miss the Old Grid Schematics, as you will not get another chance at completing that Citadel mission!

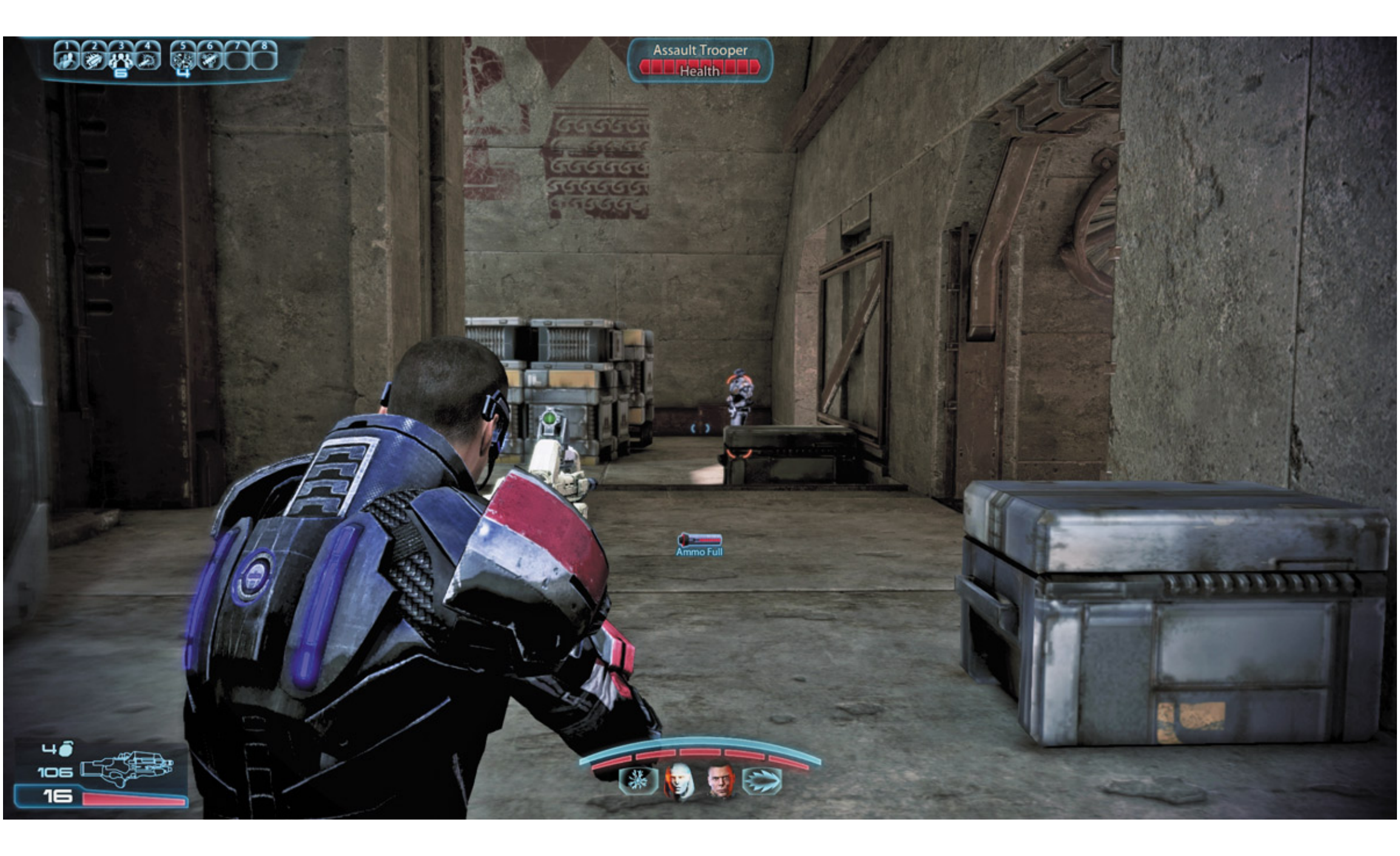
NOTE

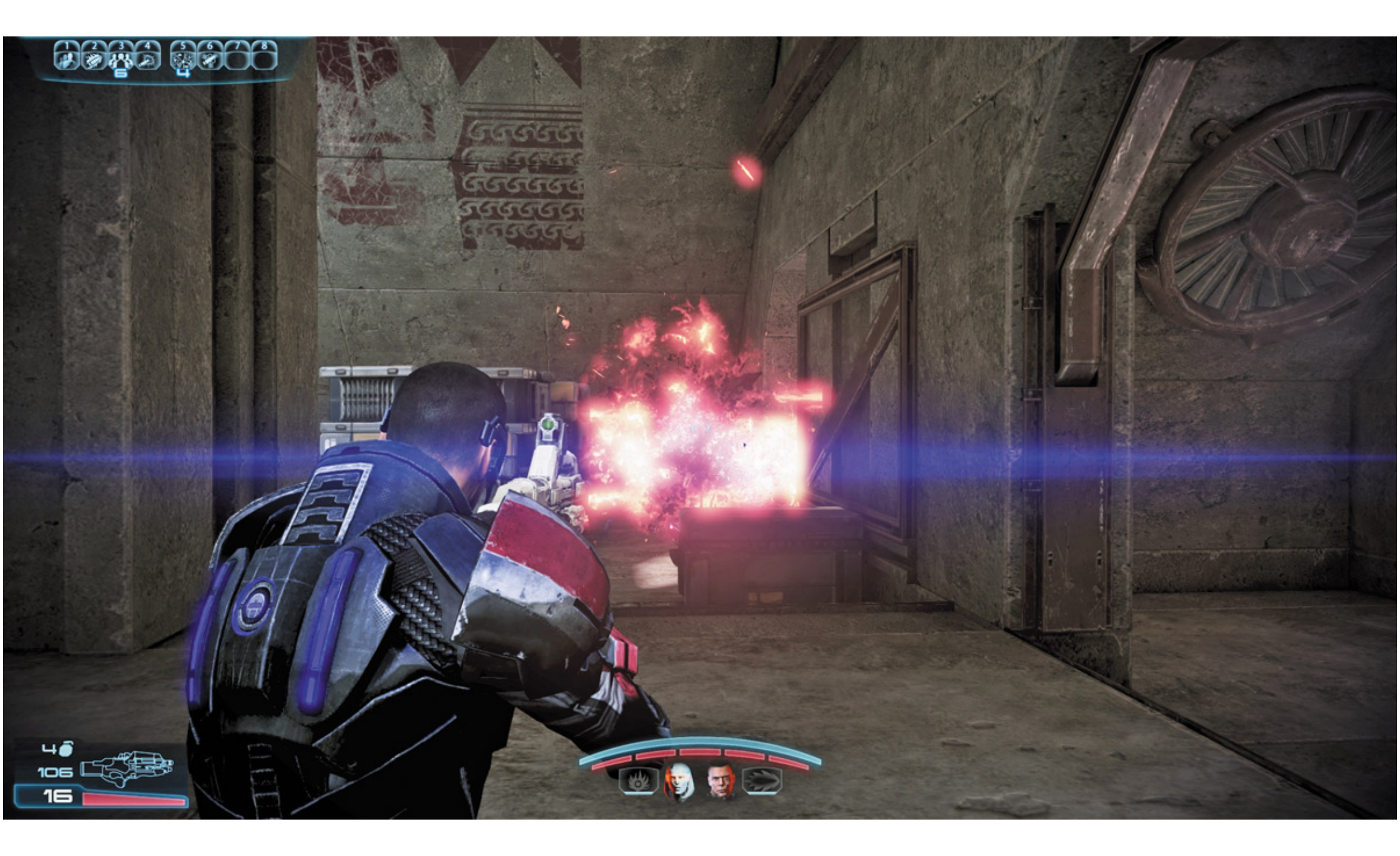
This map is the same as the Giant multiplayer map.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Armax Arsenal Gauntlets	Credits: 3,500
Medi-Gel	Old Grid Schematics (see "Citadel: Improved Power Grid")

SECURING THE CONTROL ROOM

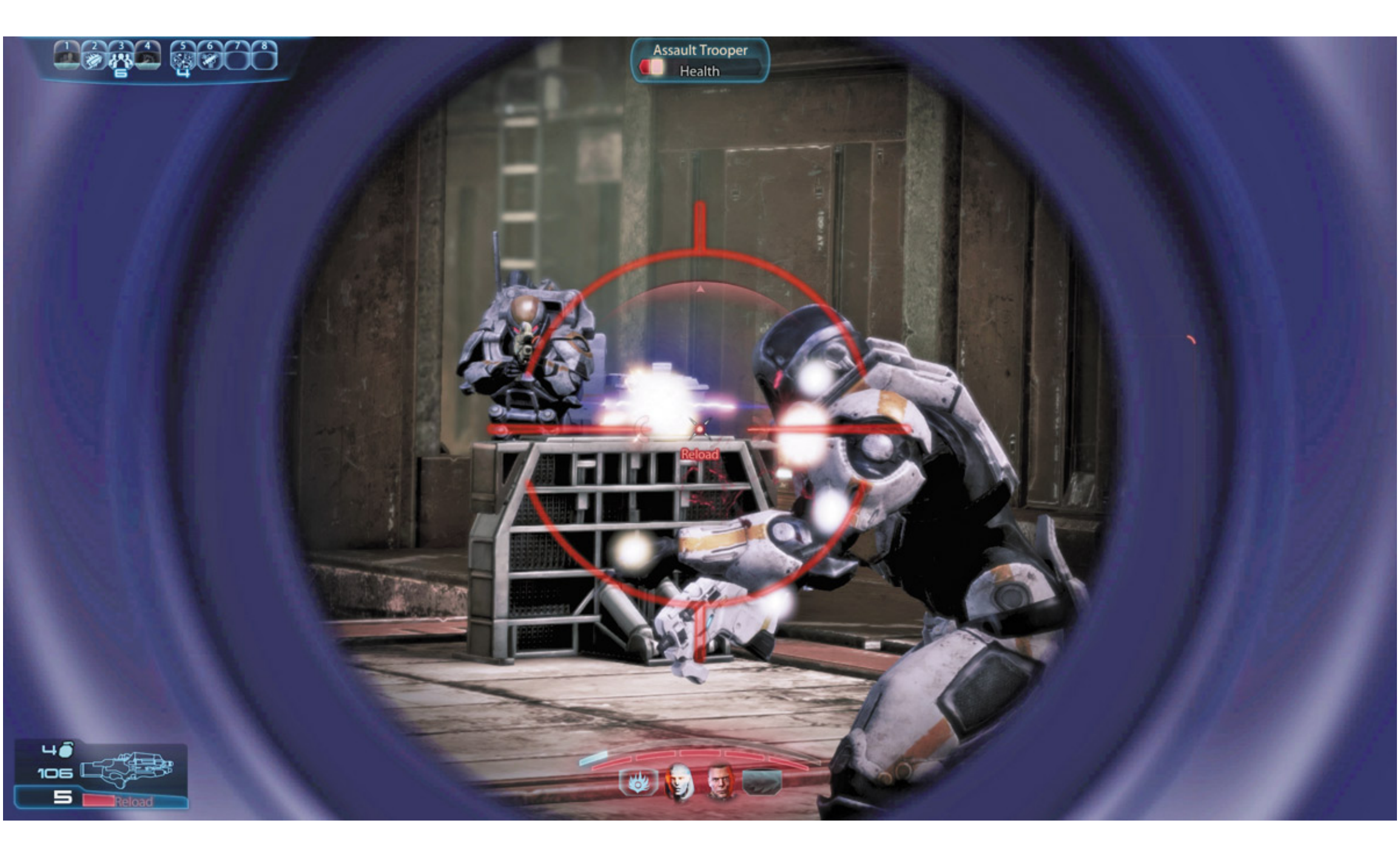


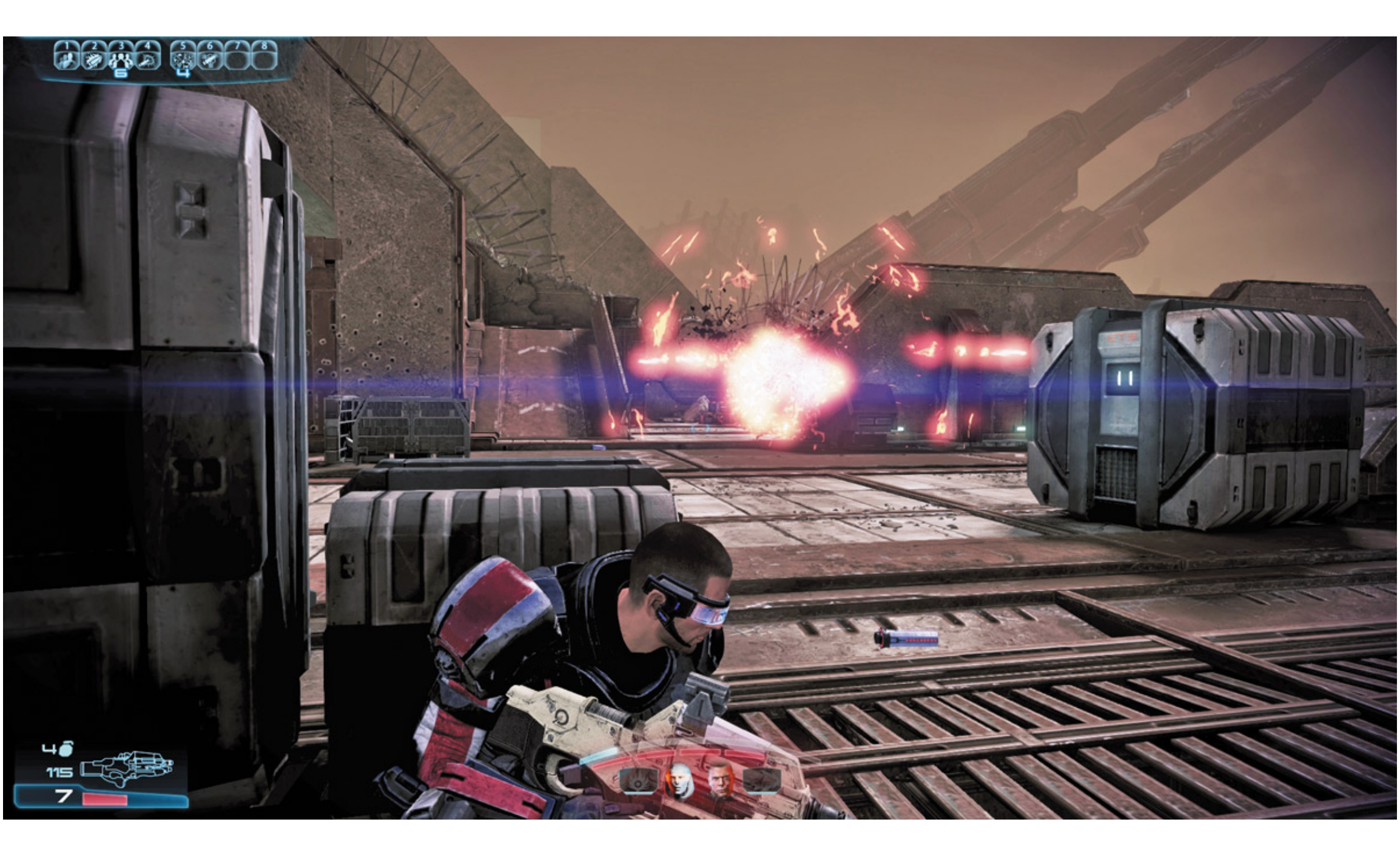


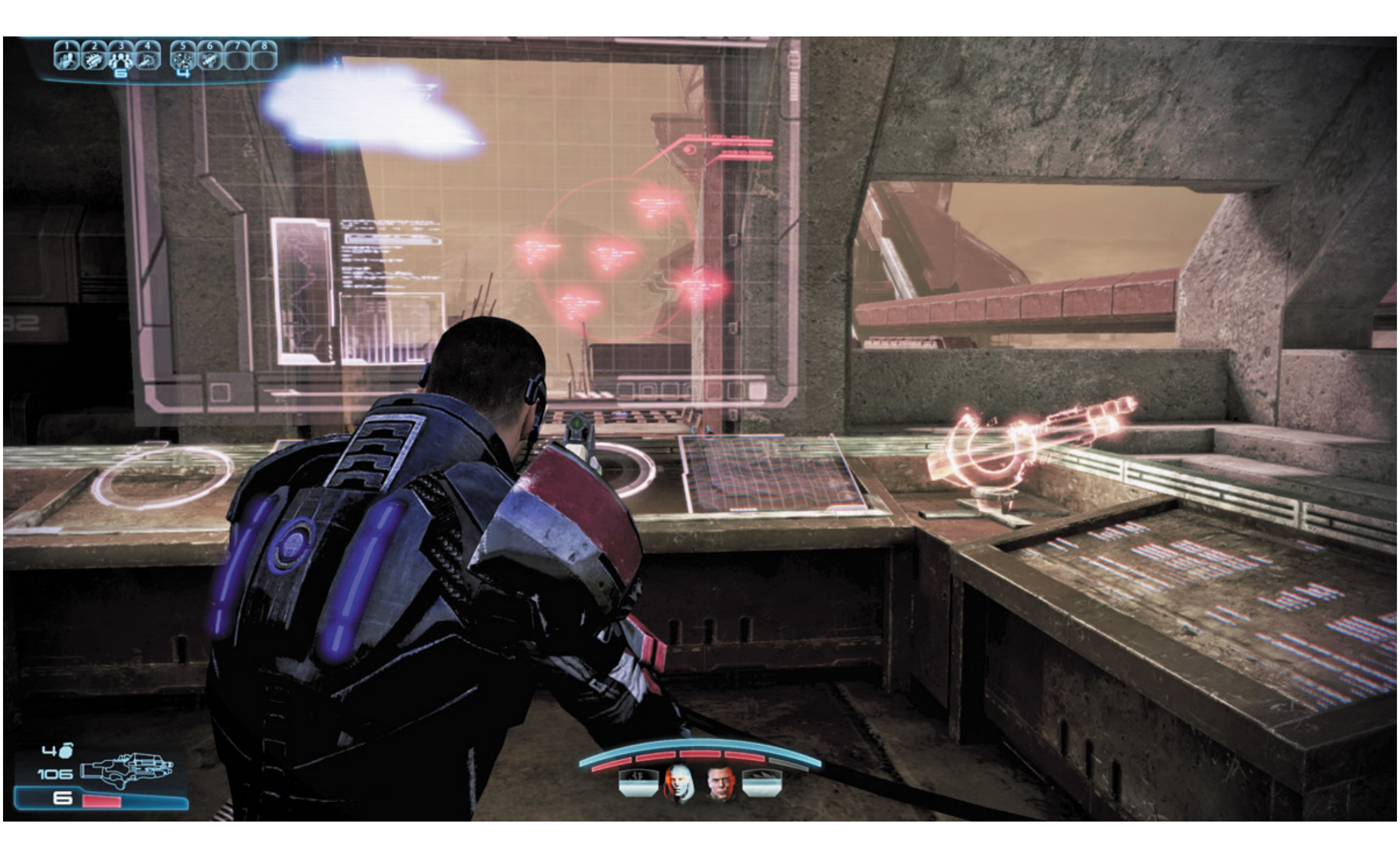
Shepard sets the tone for this op right away with a simple phrase: "Kill anything that gets in our way."

The first marked objective is to eliminate any hostiles within the control room and give the massive super-guns something better to shoot at than friendly forces.

Cerberus does not start off fully aware of your presence, so use this as a chance to get a free kill or two to start the battle.







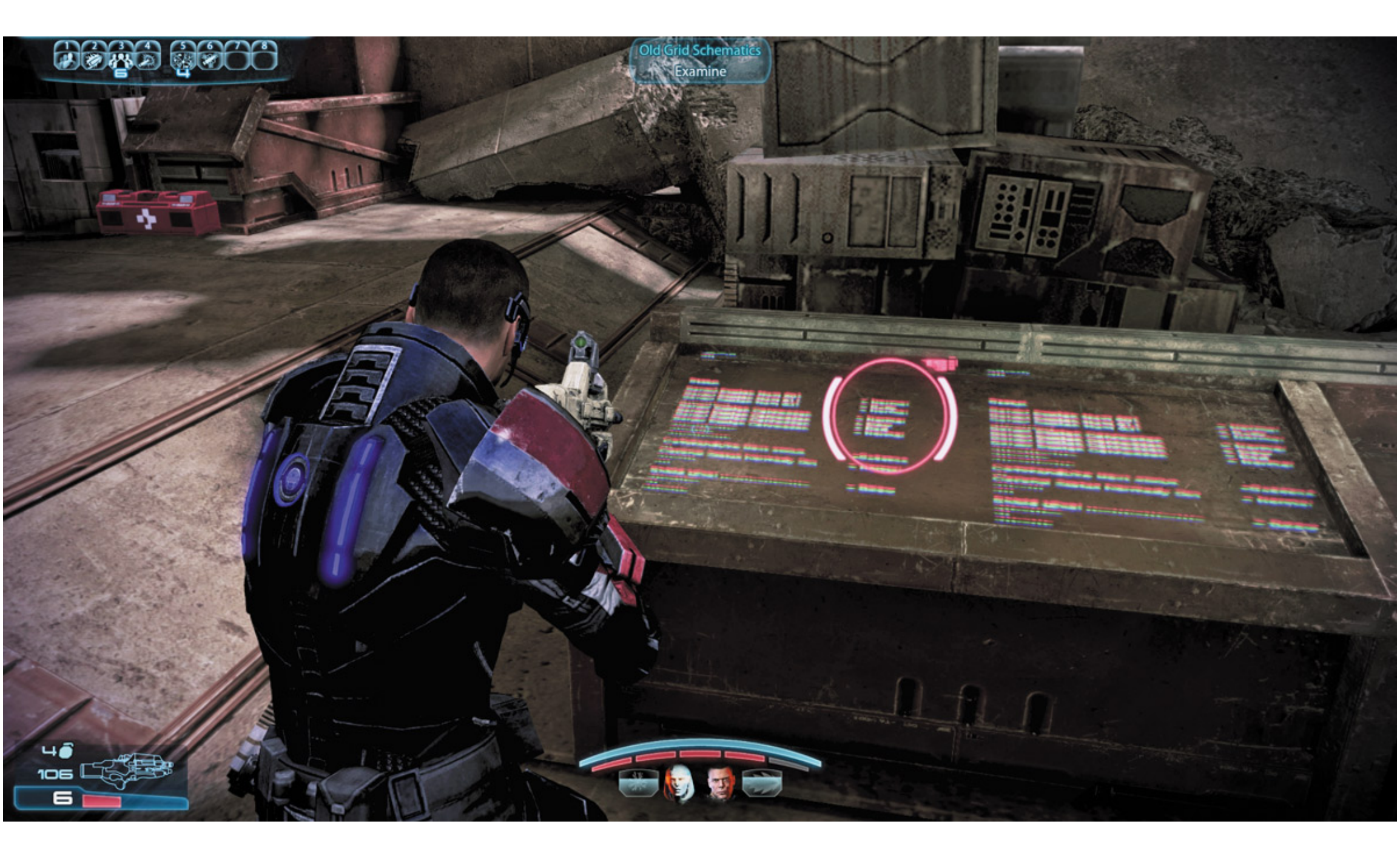
Once you attack or are spotted, Cerberus moves to repel you immediately. Expect a mix of Assault Troopers, Guardians, Centurions, and Combat Engineers.

Remember, you can take the side passages into the control room, or you can brave the exterior area and push directly through the bulk of their resistance.

However you manage it, once the control room is clear, Shepard suggests using the superguns on Cerberus vessel before it's in bombing range.

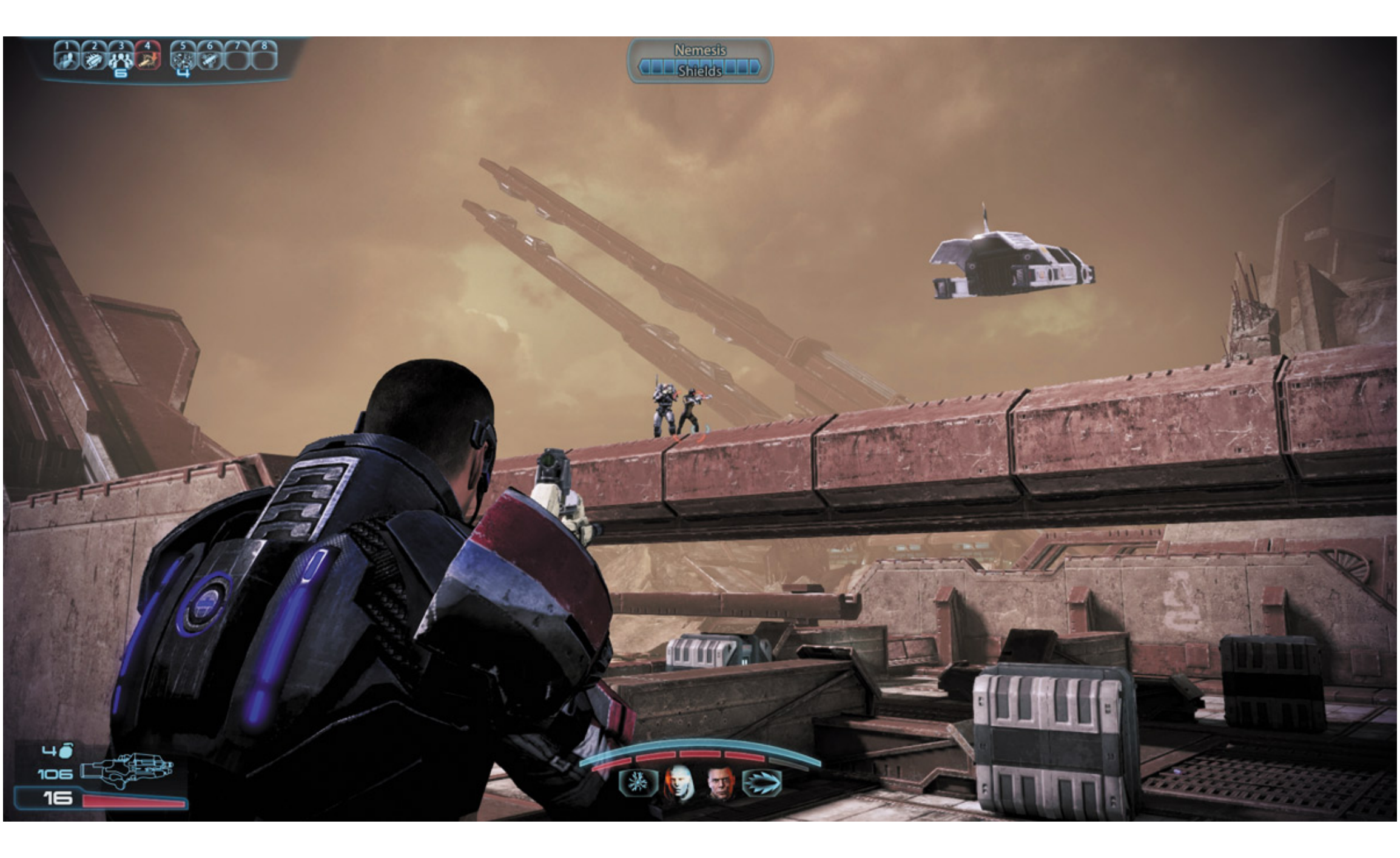
Check near the targeting displays for the guns for an Old Grid Schematic, used for a side quest on the Citadel.

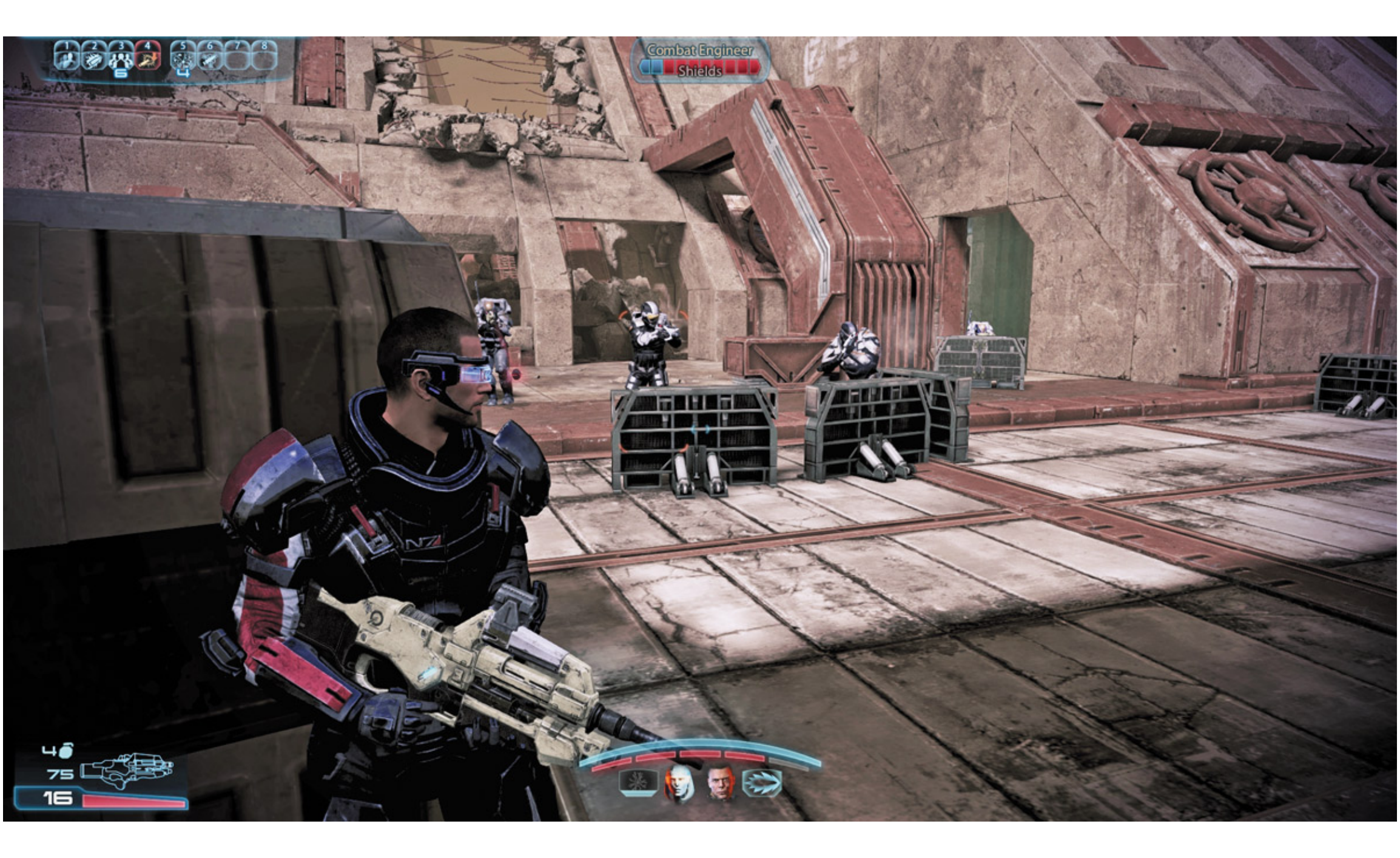
Take advantage of the lack of Cerberus interference at this time and explore the map for items and Medi-Gel. Once you attempt to use the guns, they will return in force.



Old Grid Schematic location

RESTORE POWER



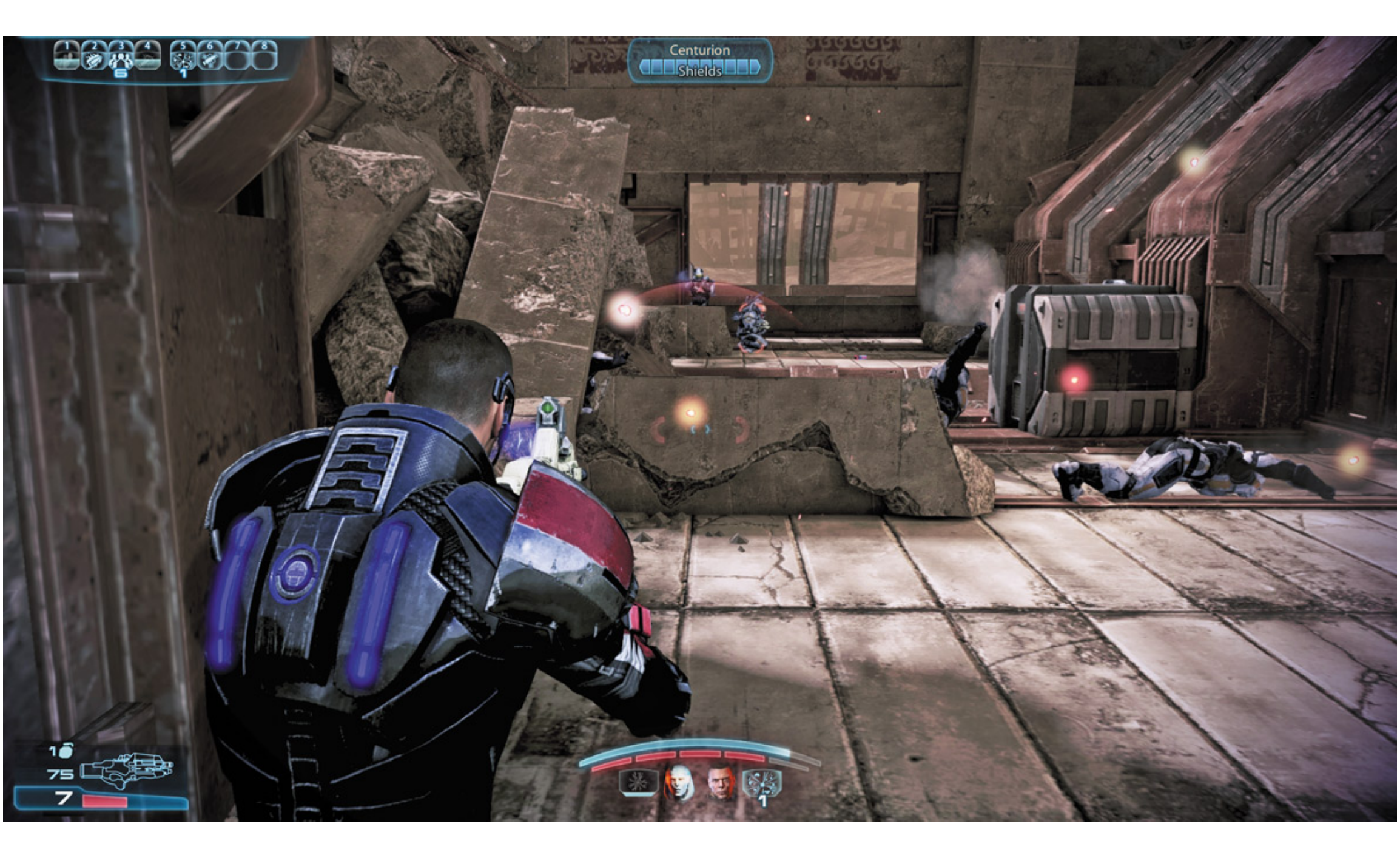


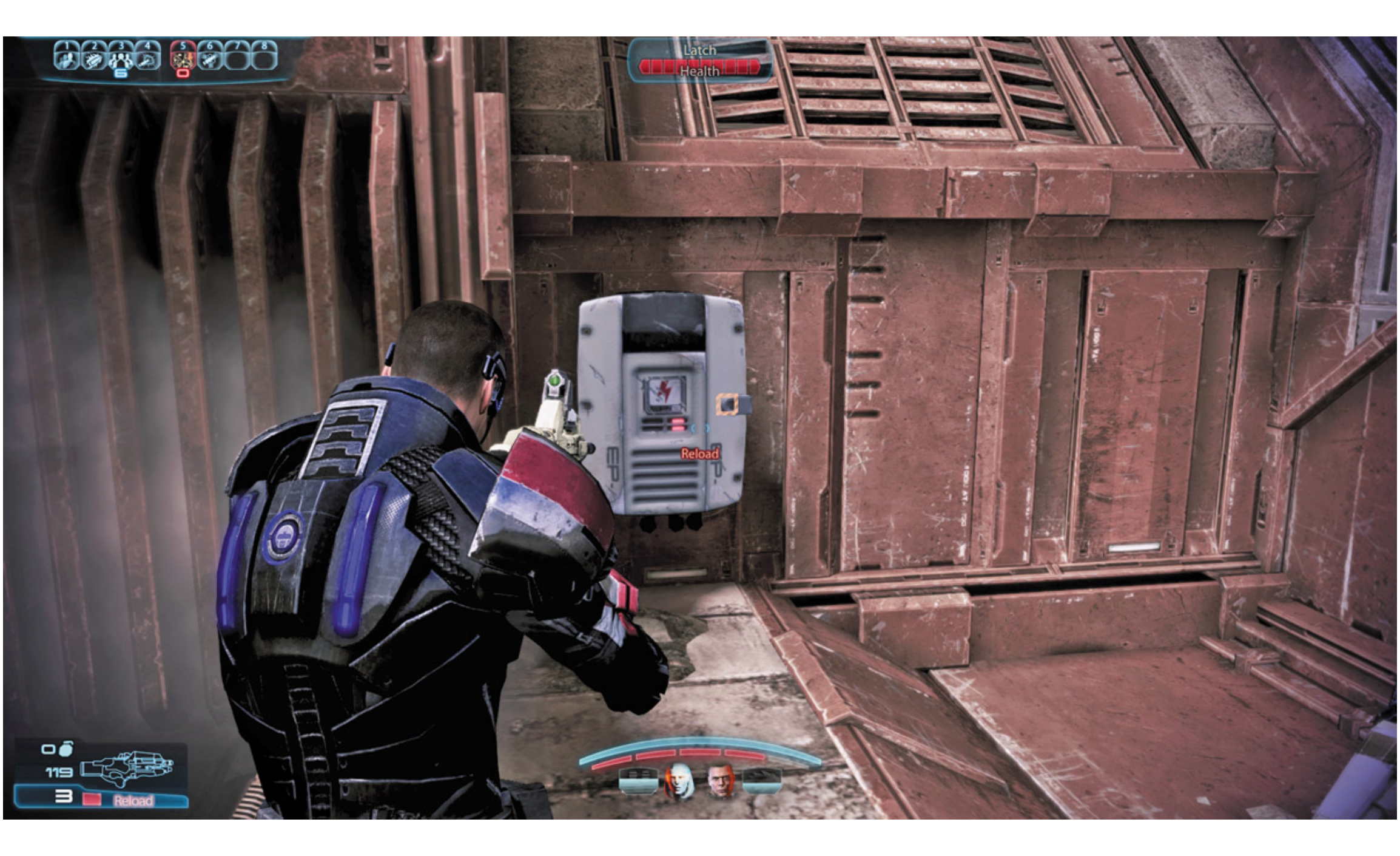
Predictably, Cerberus is one step ahead, having sabotaged power conduits for the cannons. These conduits are located inside the blasted out bunker Cortez dropped you off by.

To get the cannons back up and firing, you need to undo whatever it is they've done, which means a trip across the base back to the new objective.

Cerberus throws Nemesis snipers into the mix at this point, dropping them off atop the piping over the central exterior. Don't let them get comfortable up there.

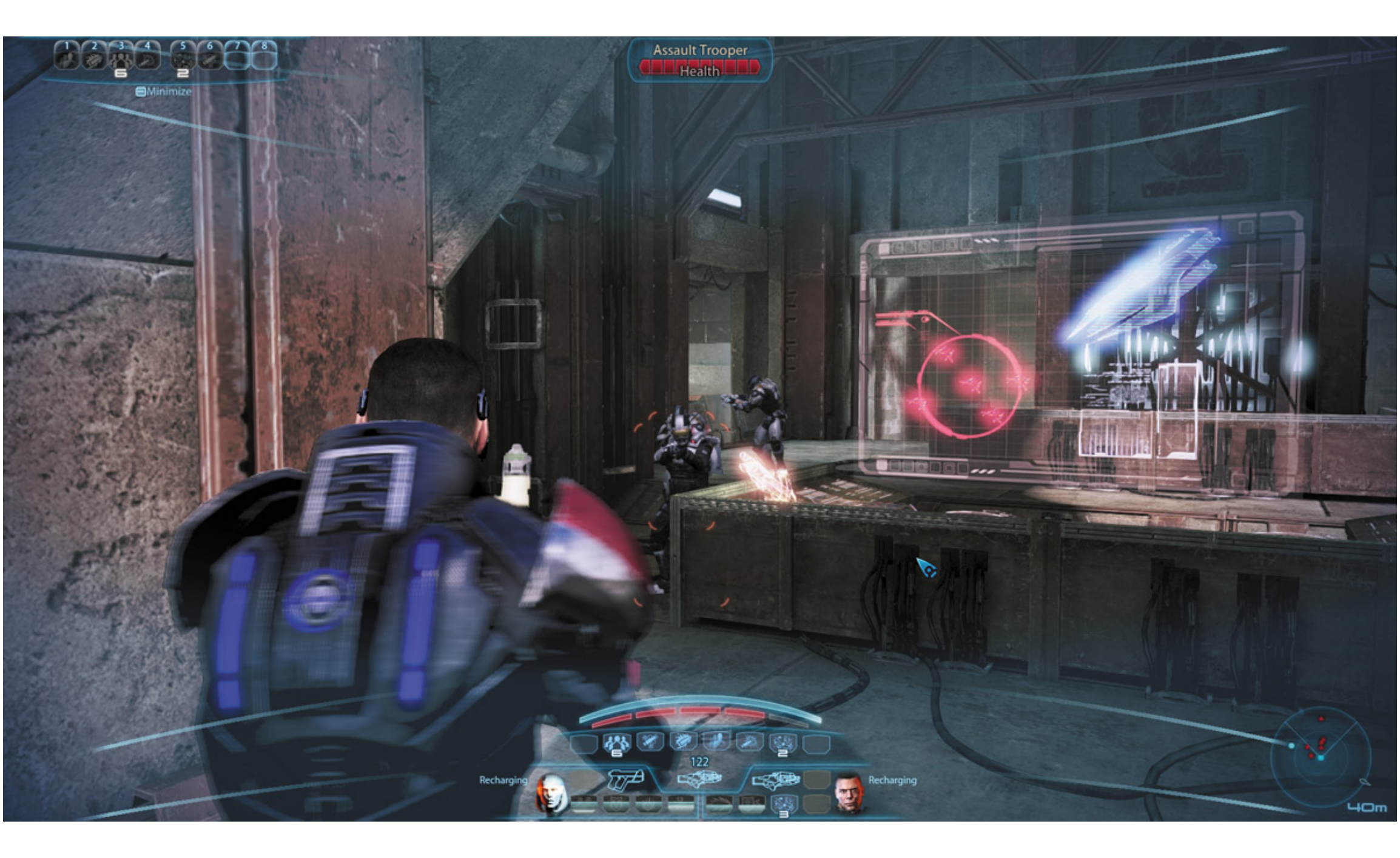
Resistance near the objective can be fairly intense.

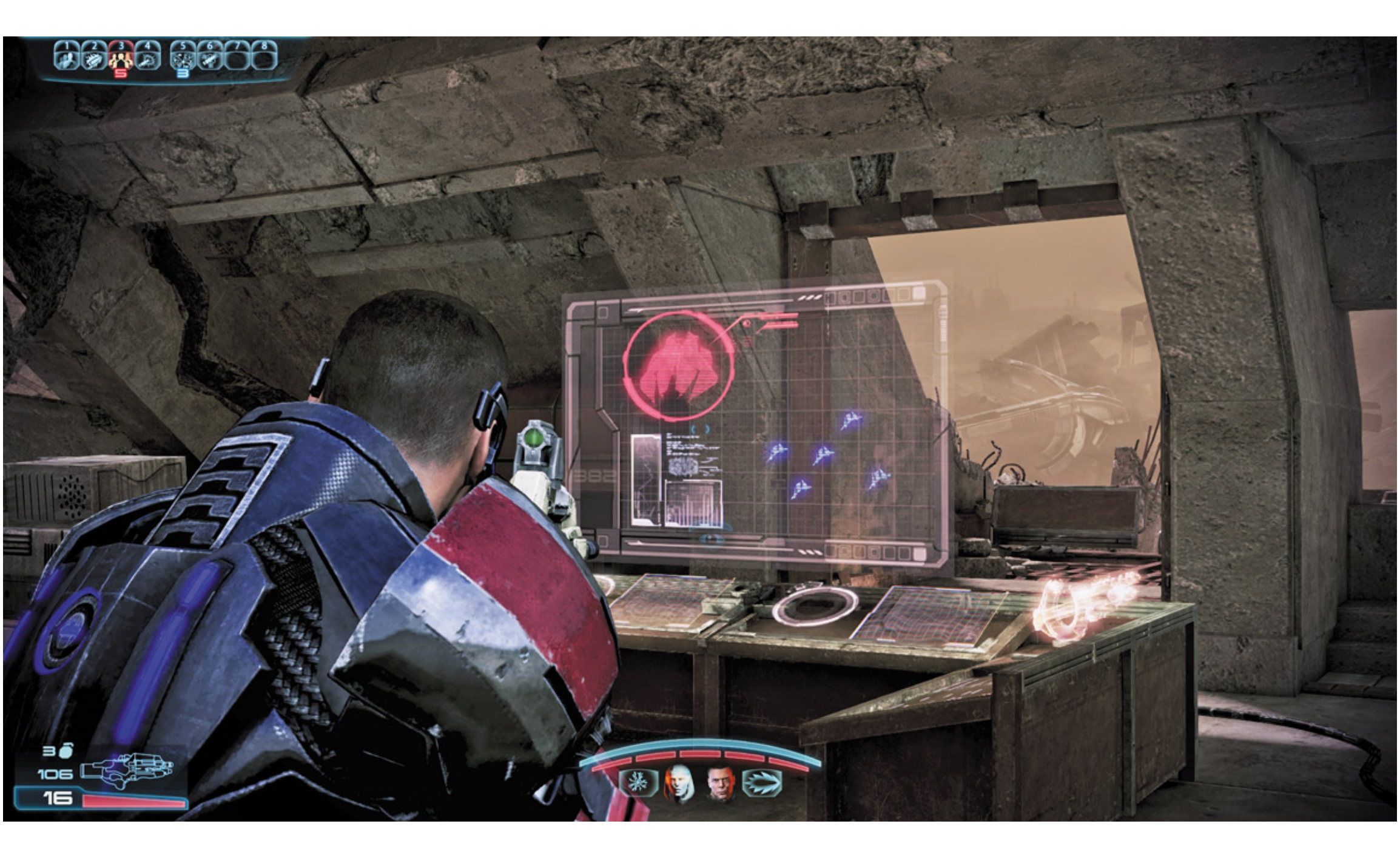


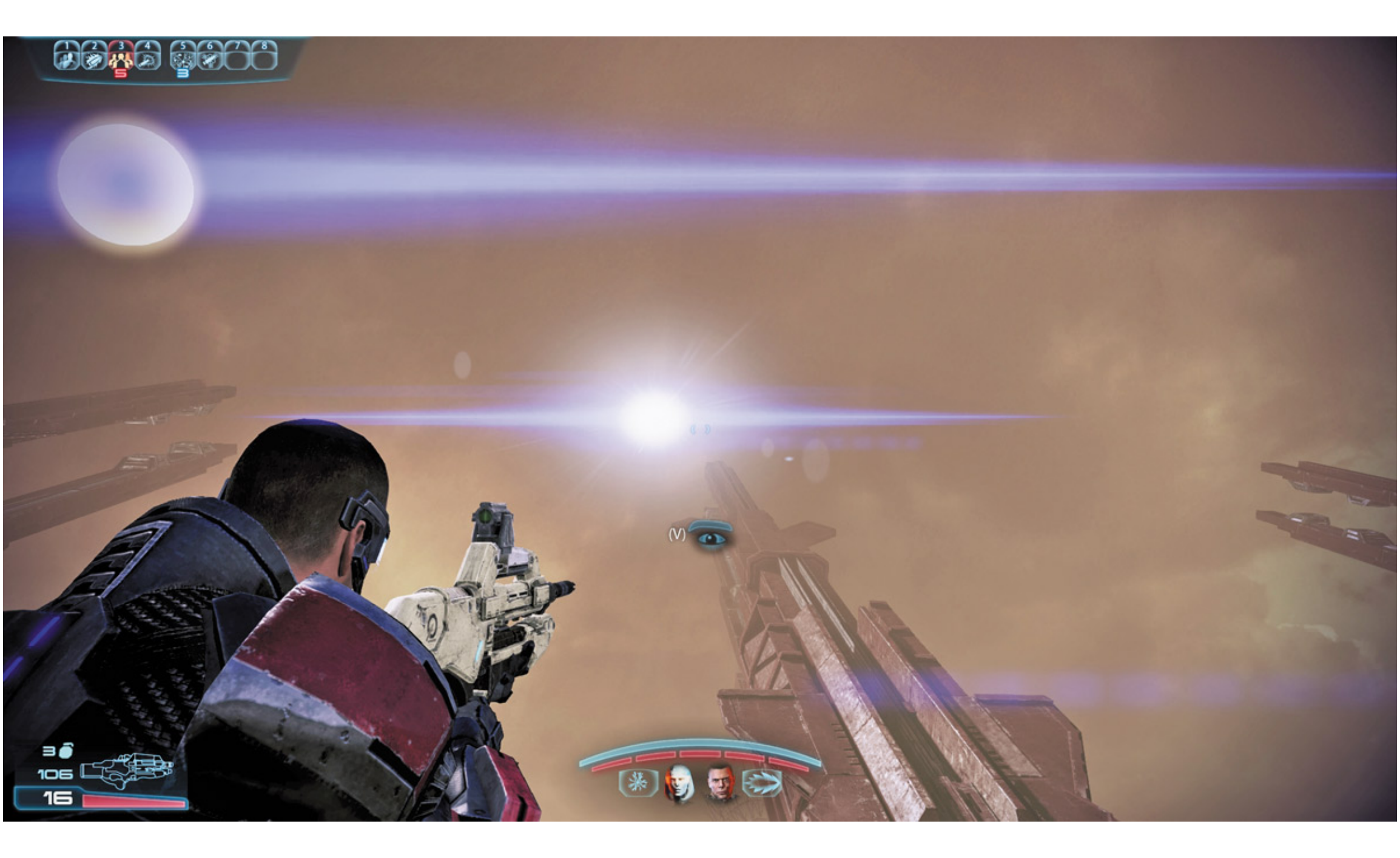


Once you've dealt with the forces near and inside the bunker, shoot out the locks on the power conduits and activate them.

RETAKE THE CONTROL ROOM







With power restored, you must once more dislodge Cerberus from the control room.

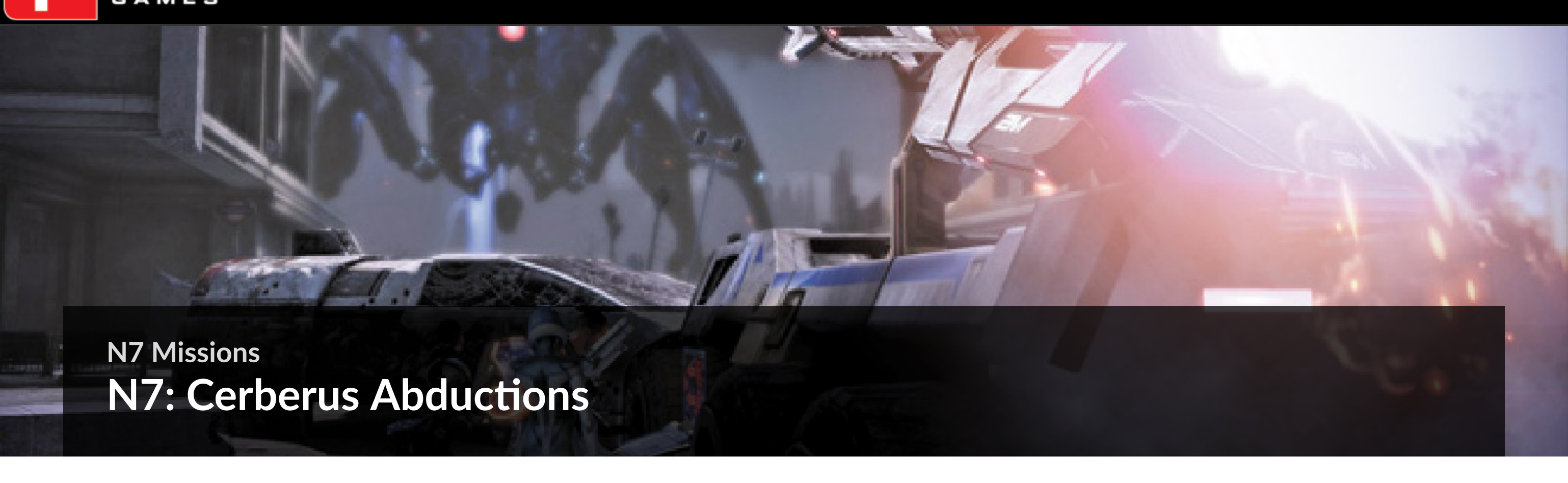
It's actually a good idea to rush the squad over there as quickly as possible, as it is likely Combat Engineers will be attempting to set up turrets inside the control room.

Denying them this will make life much easier.

Once you've resecured the control room, activate the cannons and watch the fireworks.

You can see it displayed on the holographic HUD in front of the controls, or if you're fast, you can get outside and watch the ensuing explosion in the sky.

Mission accomplished!



N7 Missions

N7: Cerberus Abductions

The colony world Benning is in the direct path of the Reaper invasion, yet Cerberus is laying siege to the populace here. At the same time, Cerberus publicly denies they are attacking or abducting any of the civilian populace.

Admiral Hackett believes there's more going on than meets the eye, and so the Normandy is being sent in to investigate and to help evac the civilians.

MISSION BRIEFING

Availability: In "Attican Traverse: Krogan Team"

Location: Arcturus Stream—Euler System—Benning

Battlegrounds: Benning is in bad shape when you arrive, and getting worse. Much of the alleys and open streets throughout this map are exposed to fire from elevated positions that only Cerberus can get to; therefore, you must get inside any of the buildings and prepare for close-quarters fighting.

This N7 mission pits you against large groups of Cerberus troops in confined areas. There are a lot of choke points and natural funnels that can be used by you and against you.

Many of the habitations require jump-jets to reach, so only Cerberus can get there; therefore, keep one eye pointed up high for snipers.

You'll be escorting civilians for part of this mission, so you will want people who can deal with threats quickly. Giving Garrus a powerful sniper rifle and teaming up with him using a rifle of your own can quickly put down any one soldier on the field.

EDI and James are also excellent candidates, as their abilities combo well off of one another.

Consequence Overview: There are no Paragon or Renegade decisions for this mission. On the way to the first objective, look for dog tags lying on the ground; a certain Citadel ambassador has been looking for evidence of his son's survival or demise on Benning. Unfortunately, this is all that remains.

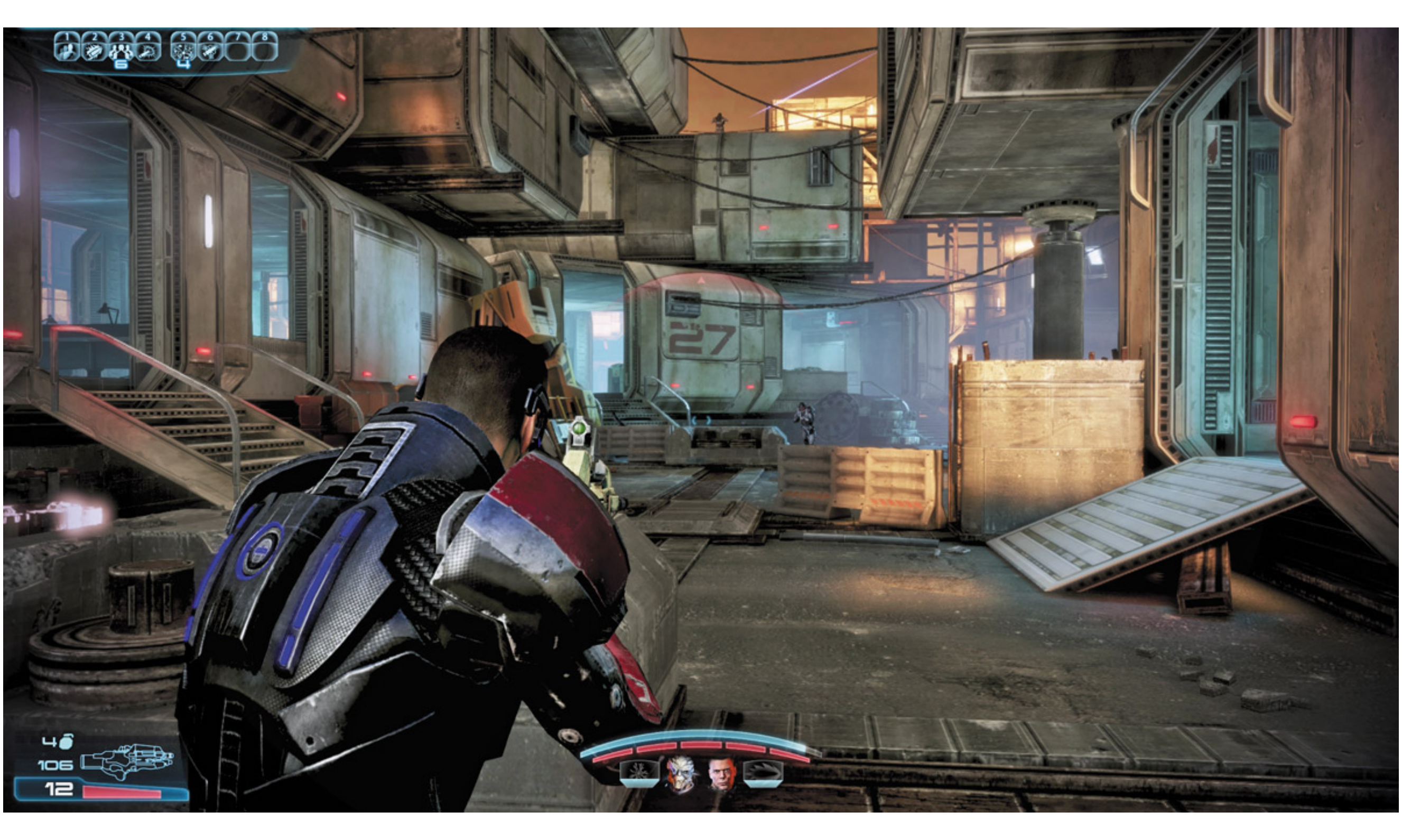
NOTE

This map is the same as the Ghost multiplayer map.

ITEM REQUISITION RUNDOWN

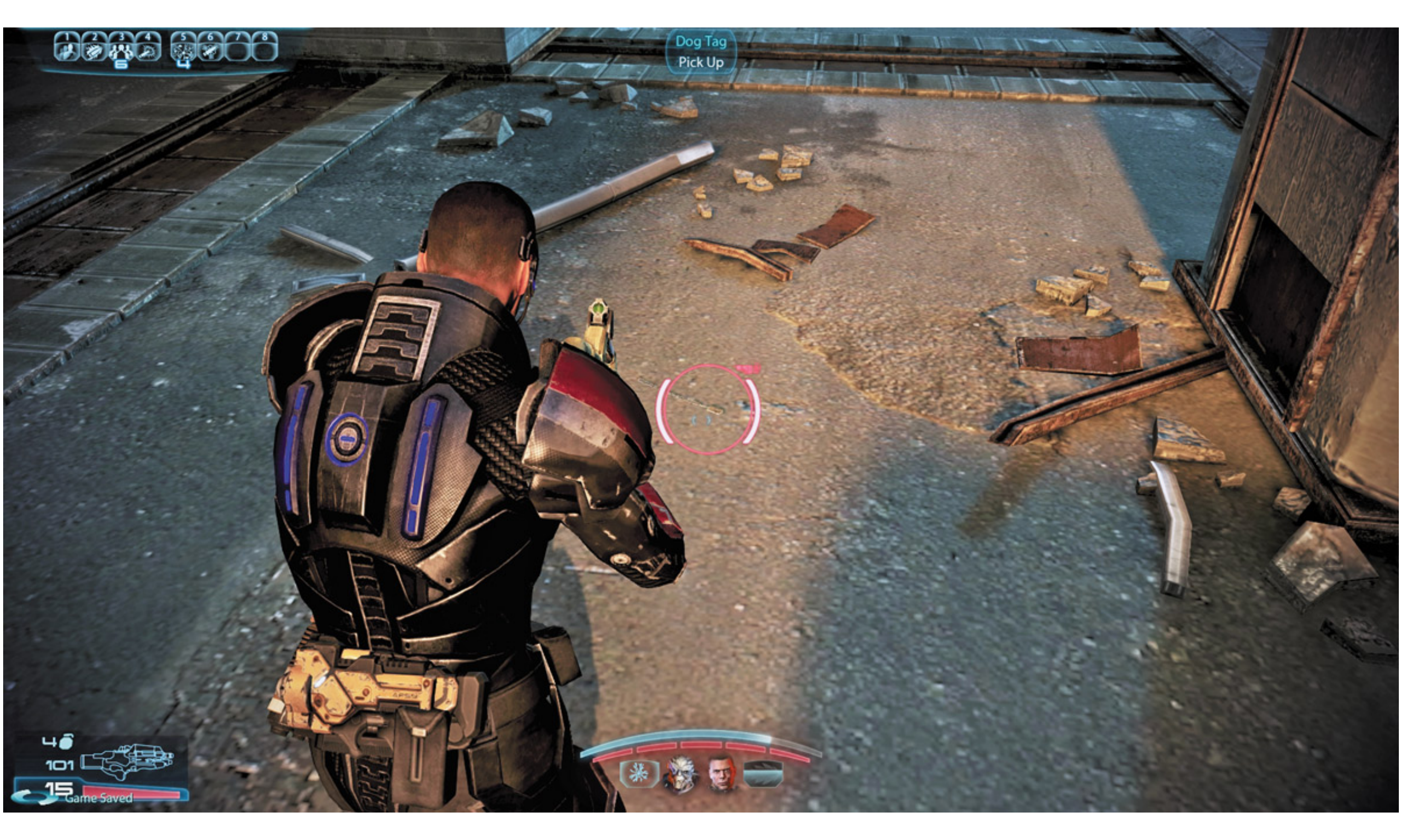
Capacitor Helmet	Dog Tag
Credits: 2,500 (x4)	

SECURE THE UPPER STREETS



As soon as you arrive at the landing pad, Cortez has bad news for you. Civilians are currently engaged with Cerberus troops in the area and are being overrun.

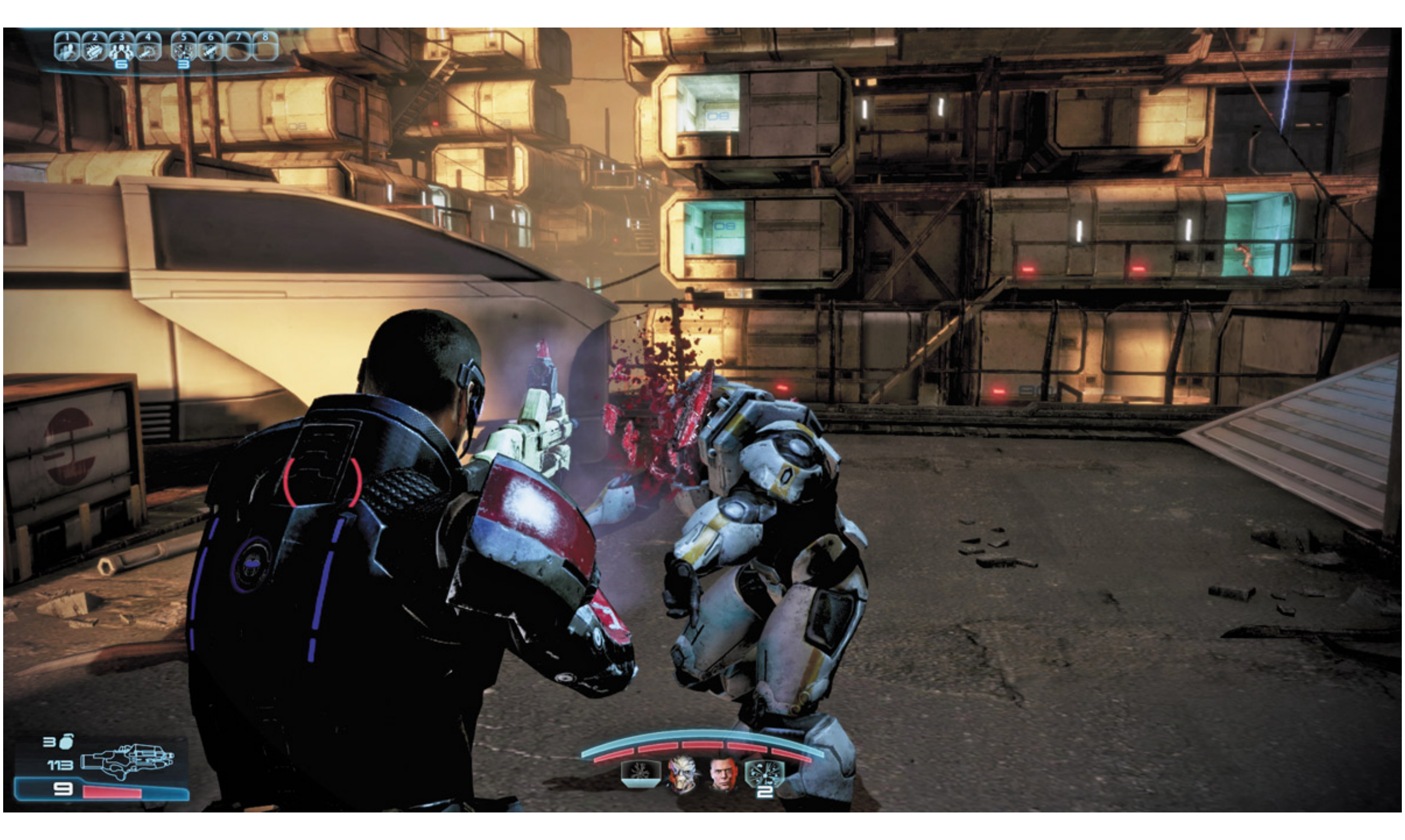
You need to get over to them and provide cover. Failing that, you must at least give Cerberus something else to shoot at. Watch out for turrets laid down by Combat Engineers.



Dog Tag

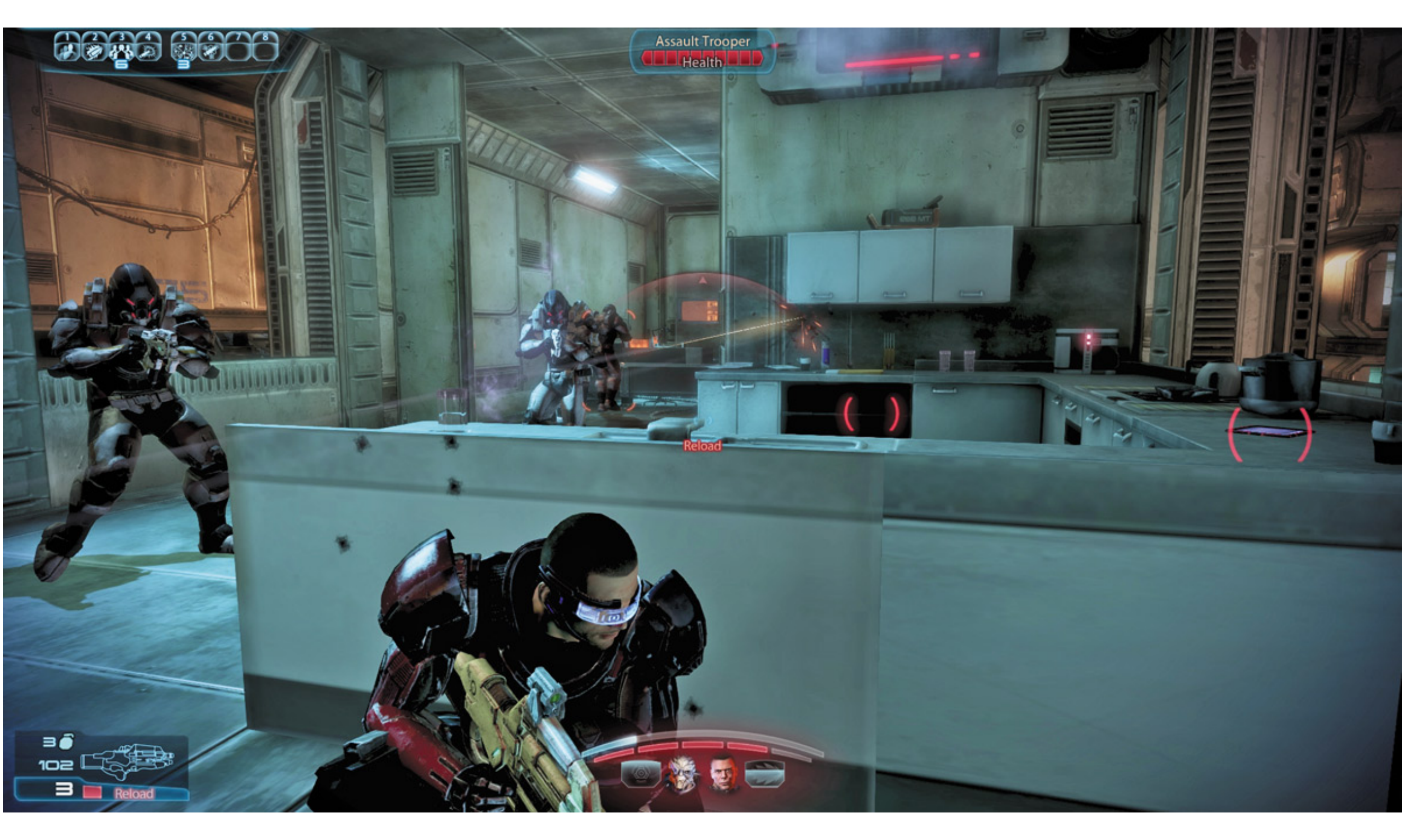
In the area you're first directed to, look for this Dog Tag located near a pillar in the outdoors section of the upper streets. It's incredibly easy to miss.

ESCORT THE CIVILIANS



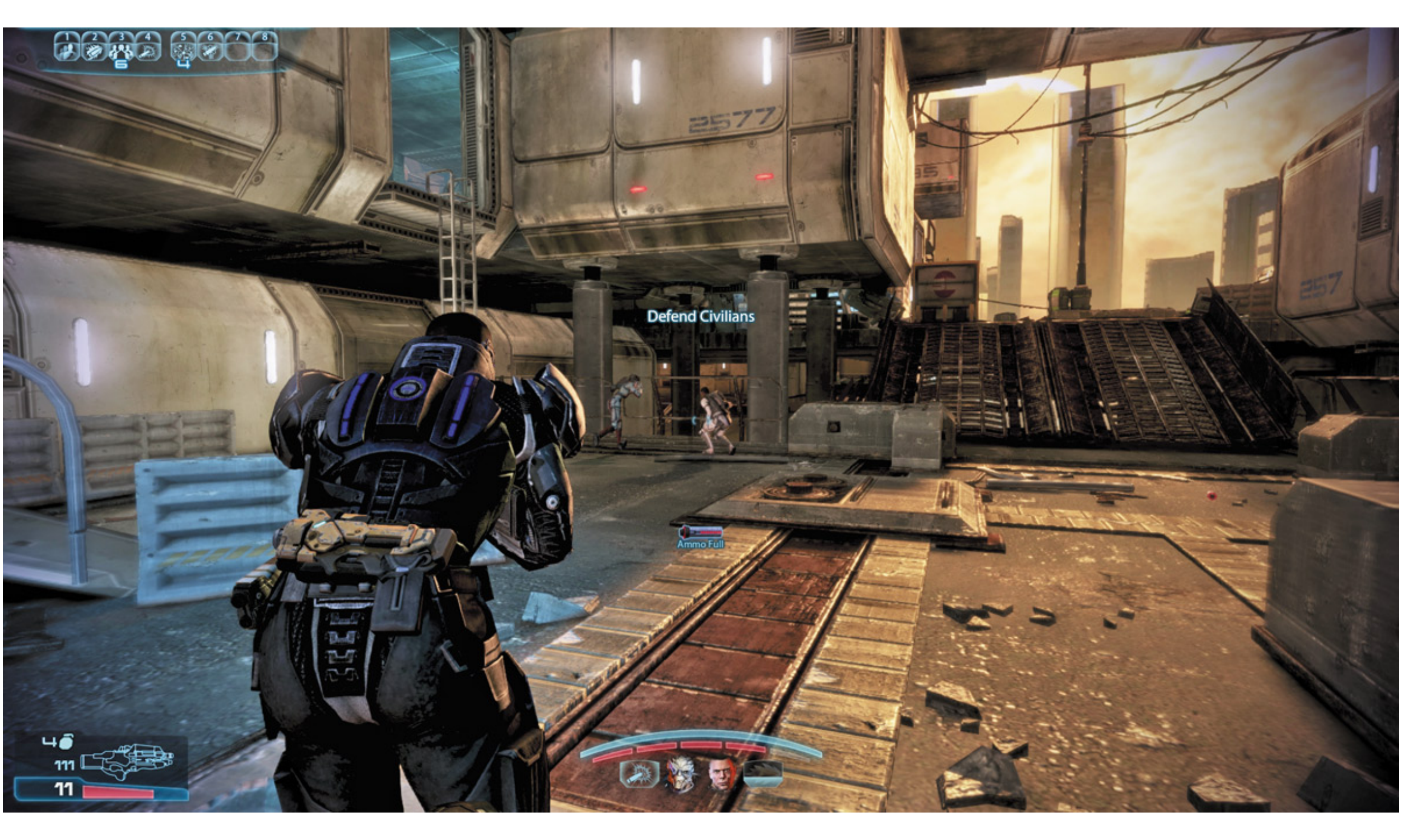
Once you eliminate the initial Cerberus team, you get word of more civilians on the map's other side being pinned down by more hostiles.

In your rush to protect the civilians, watch your fire as you engage the enemy. Clear out any nearby enemies, then speak with one of the civilians.



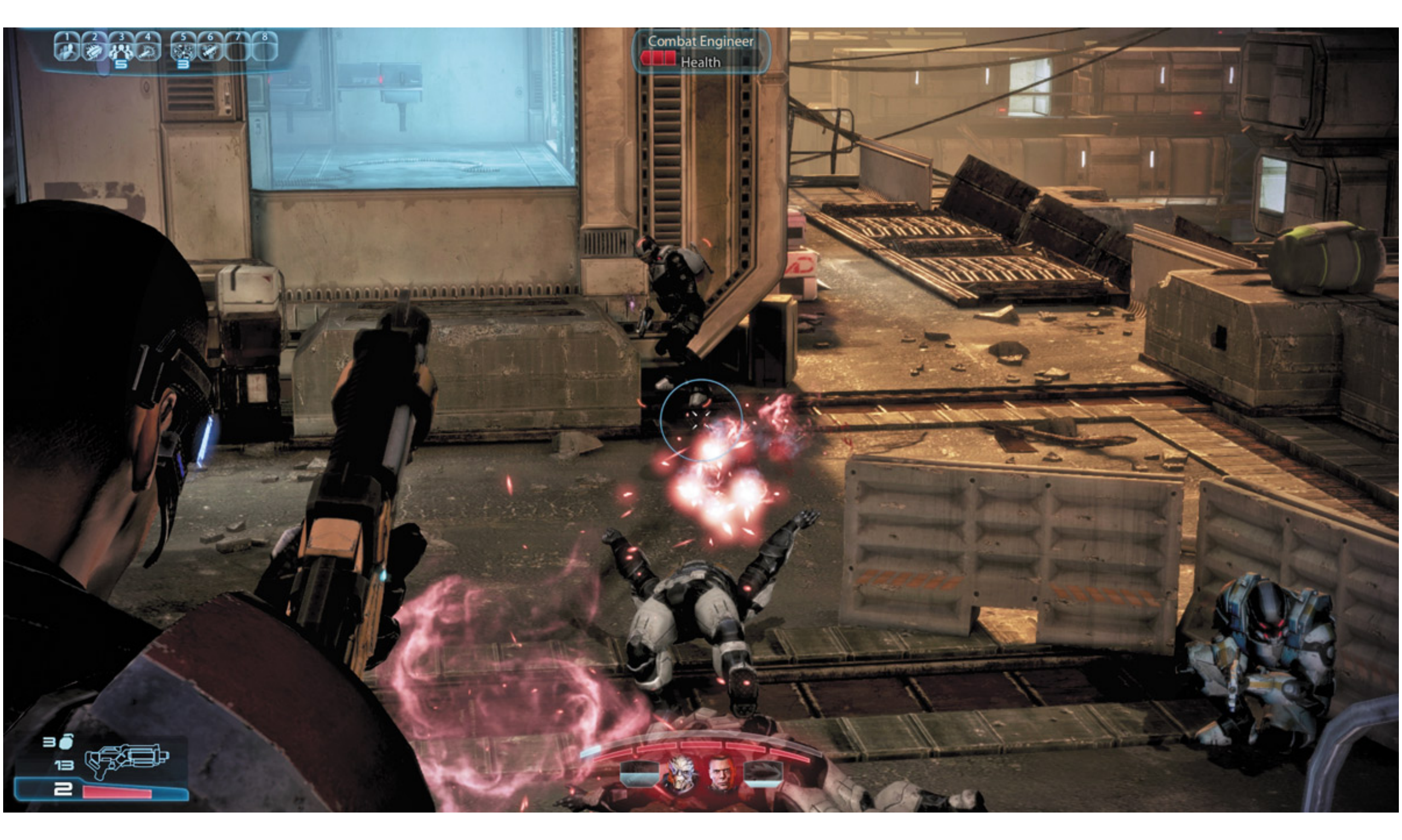
As soon as you talk with the civilians, more Cerberus troops begin to rush into the area. You can make a stand right near your precious cargo, or you can spread your squad out, taking advantage of the nearby elevated building and its clean firing angles at the street below.

Either way, at least one squad member should keep close to them for protection, as many Cerberus troops tend to gather in the building leading to the landing pad.



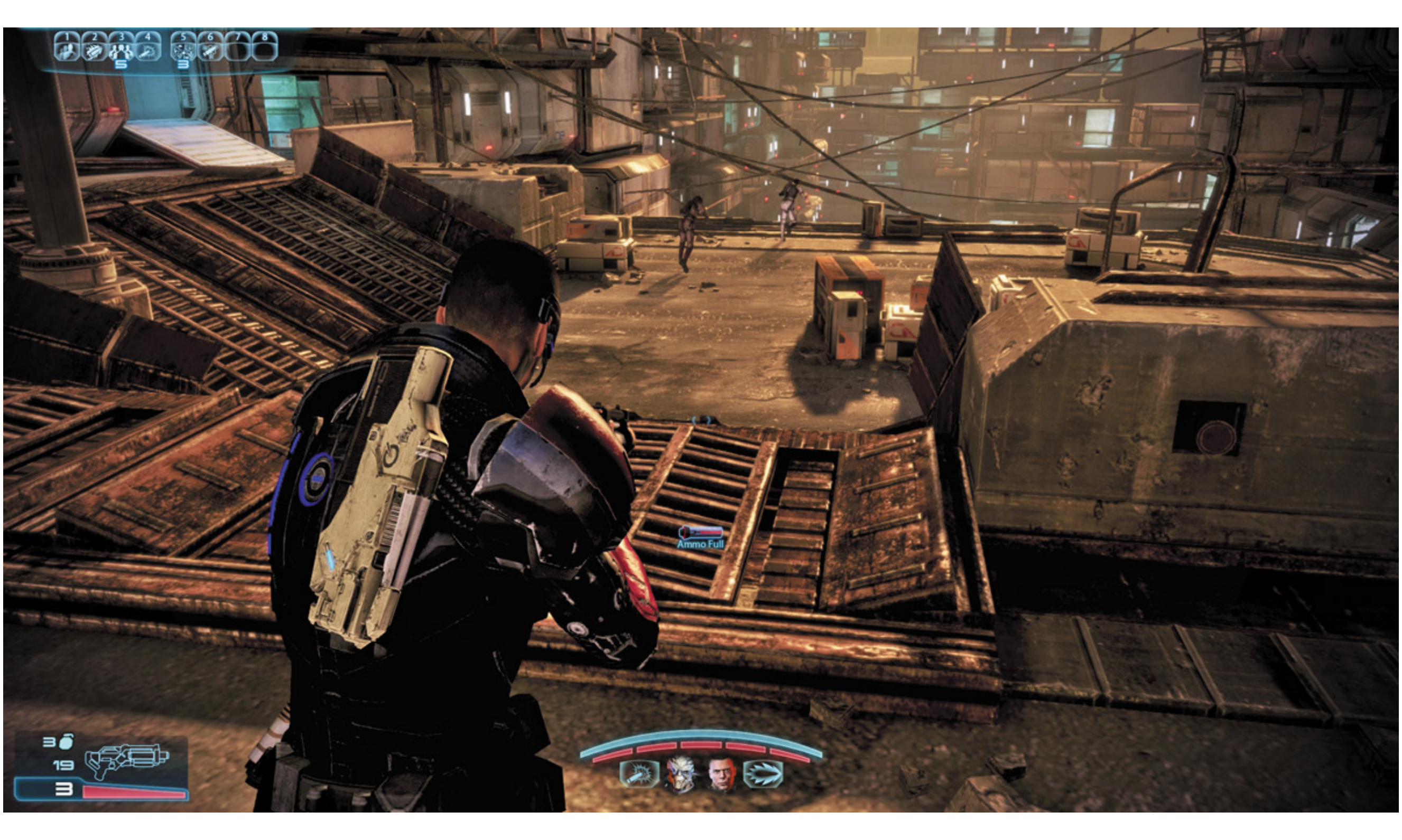
After a wave has been cleared, the civilians will advance to the next "safe spot."

Unfortunately, this means they will travel through the lower street, giving Cerberus all manner of sniping positions on them and consequently on any of the squad who are close by defending them.



One stop that the civilians make puts them right next to a ladder Cerberus uses to flank them. Use your squad to keep Cerberus occupied on one front, climb the ladder yourself, and clear out the structure.

From there, you can get a good position on the enemy gathering near the landing pad.



Eventually, you will prove too much for Cerberus to handle, and the civilians will reach the landing pad with no further harassment. Cortez will swoop in to pick up the team, and the mission is all but over. But don't be so quick to leave!

Make sure you've found everything that can be collected on the map, particularly those Dog Tags and the Capacitor Helmet!

N7 Missions

N7: Cerberus Fighter Base

LAUNCH
RAMP

Noveria is a world familiar to Shepard, who came here during the hunt for Saren Arterius. Now the new Normandy is being sent to this world to neutralize a key Cerberus installation.

The fighters stationed here are wreaking havoc on the Alliance. Admiral Hackett wants to seize the base, but the air defenses are too much for a head-on assault. You need to neutralize those first.

MISSION BRIEFING

Availability: After "Priority: Tuchanka"

Location: Horsehead Nebula—Pax System—Noveria

Battlegrounds: In spite of the scale of the facility, your battle here takes place in a very small area.

The walkways of exterior section are wide enough to allow for traffic but are also long enough that running down them between pieces of cover leaves you vulnerable to incoming fire for longer than you might like.

The base's interior is separated into an upper and lower level. The upper level is cramped, connected directly to the landing pad via a series of catwalks.

It's a defensible location with lots of cover, making a push through the area a challenge if Cerberus has an established presence.

The lower level interior is an L-shaped area where one of the primary objectives of the mission is located. It's a bit more open but still has plenty of usable cover for both sides to use.

You'll want to be cautious regarding who you bring to the mission.

At one point, you'll be asked to choose a squad member to disable a security protocol, leaving you down a man for the ensuing firefight. Make sure you bring a character and weapons that are effective against Cerberus troops.

Consequence Overview: There are no conversational decisions made here. However, you earn a War Asset after clearing this assignment.

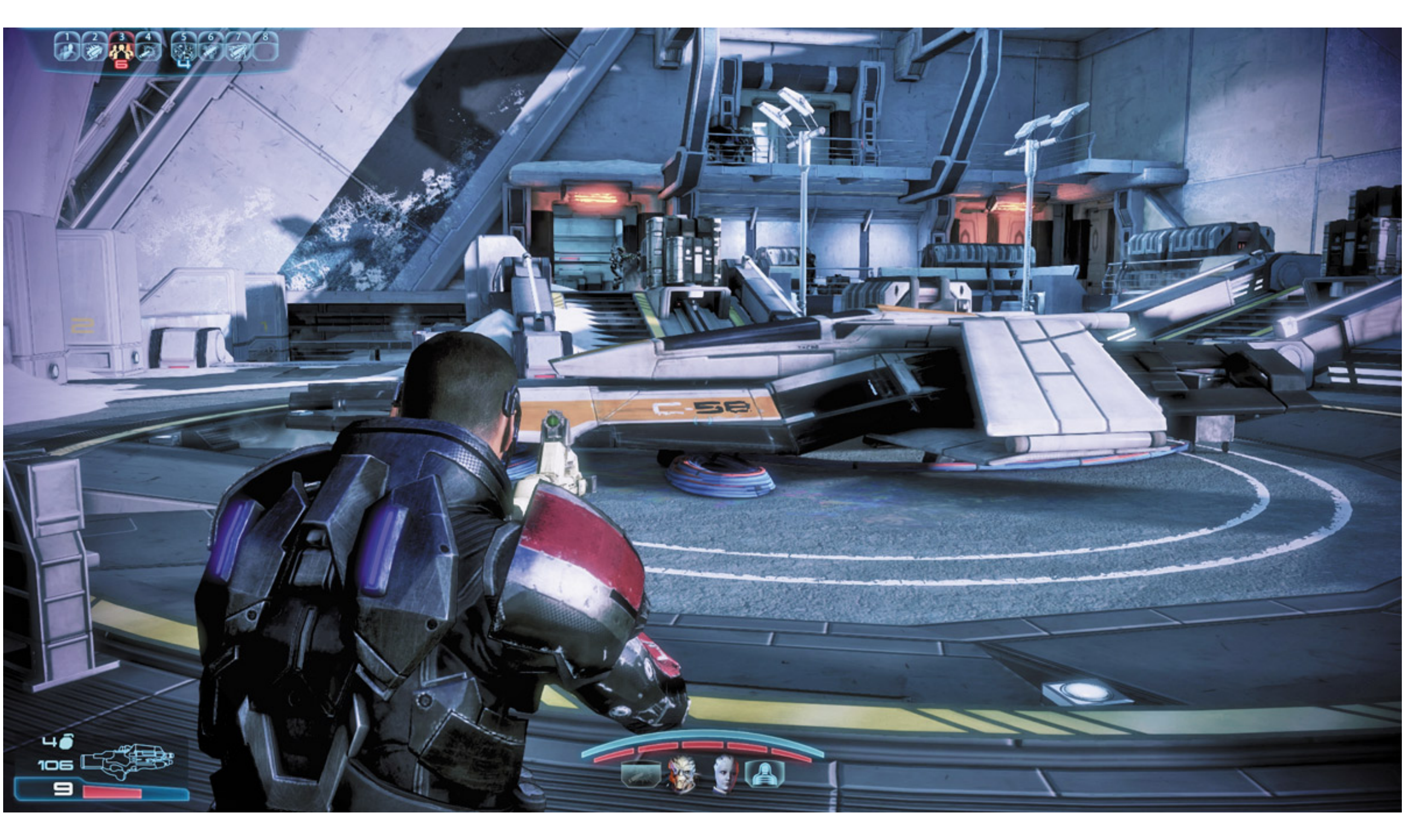
NOTE

This map is the same as the White multiplayer map.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

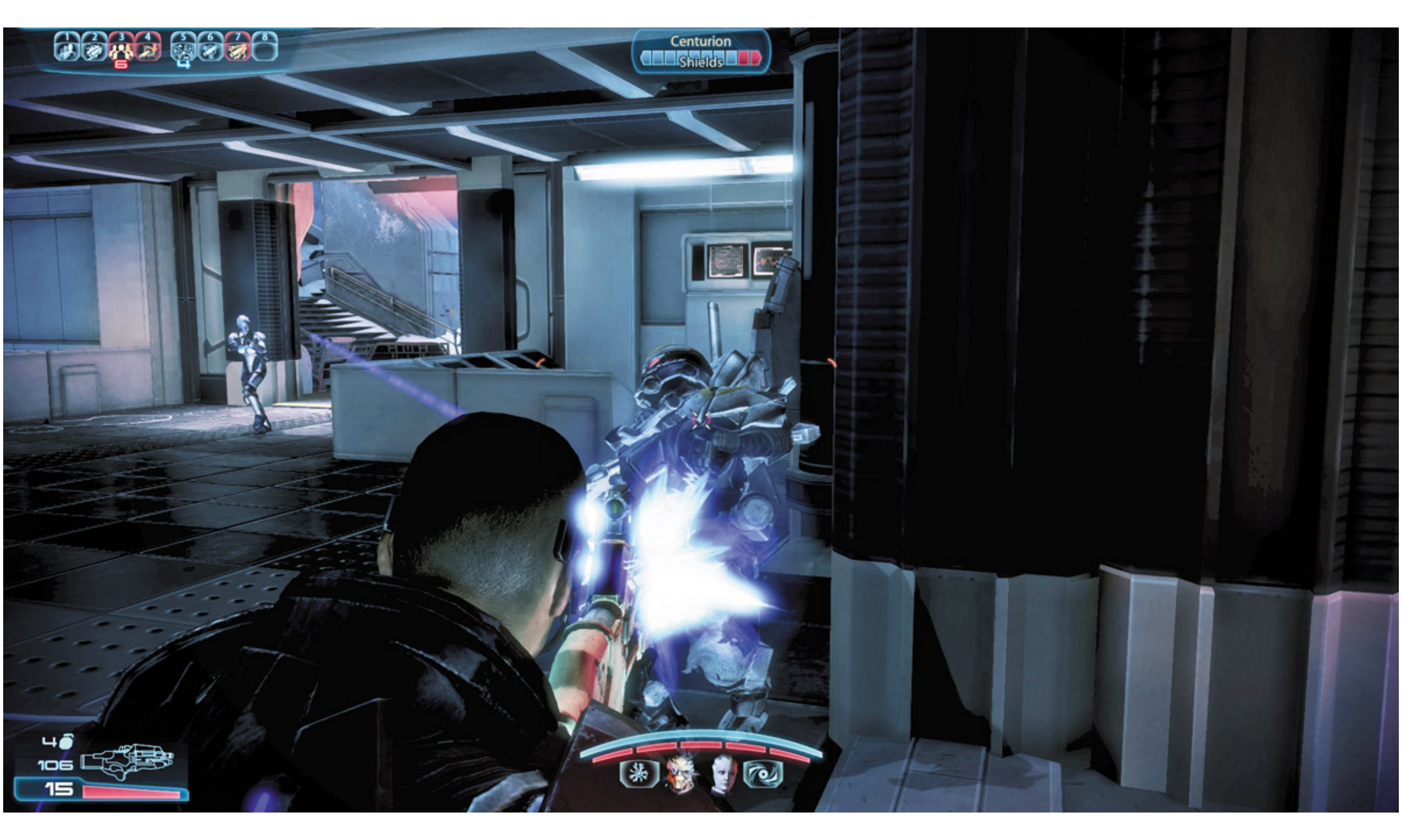
Credits: 2,000 (x4)	Medi-Gel (x3)
Heating Unit Schematics (See "Citadel: Heating Unit Stabilizers," *Hub Missions*)	Pistol Magazine Upgrade

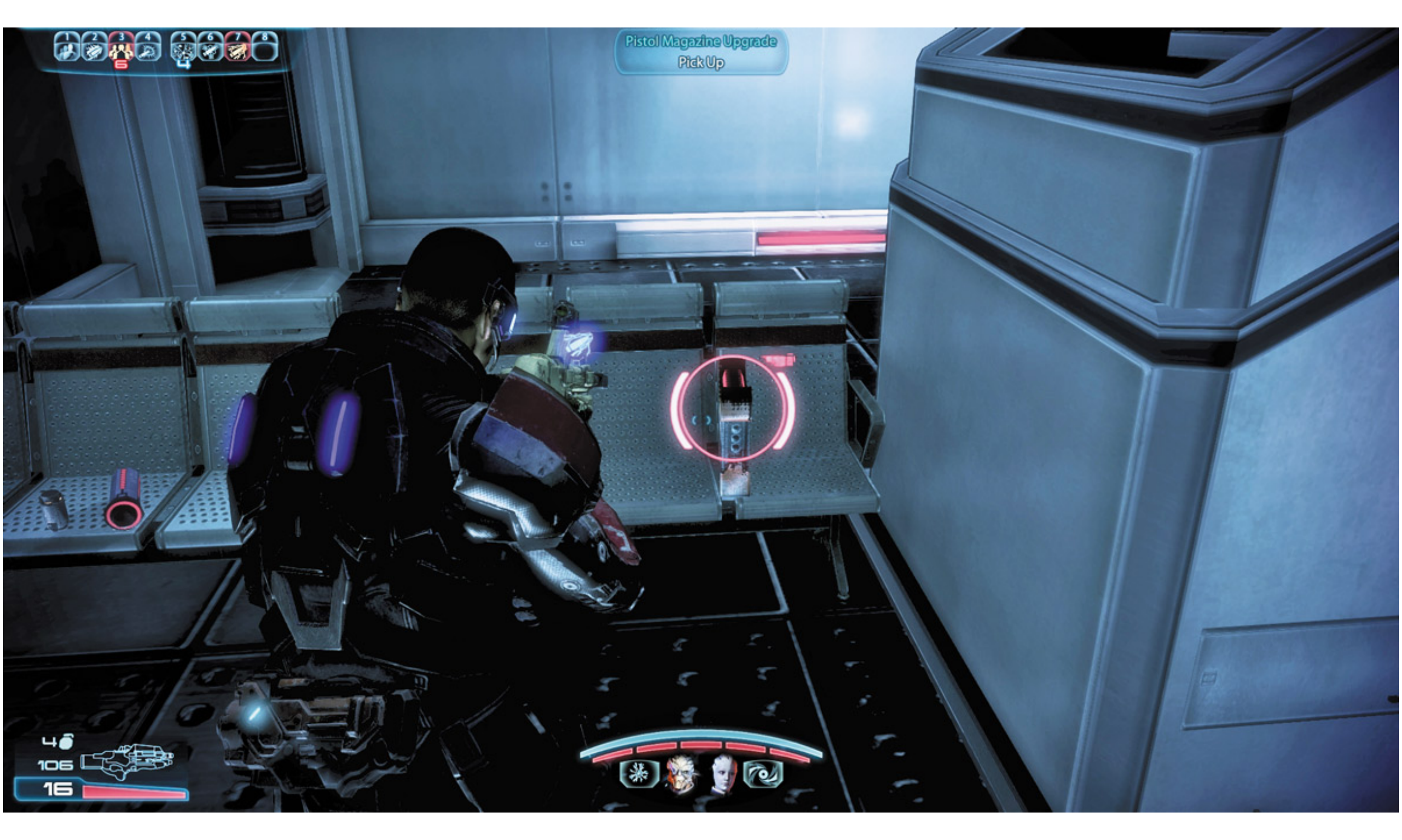
CLEAR THE AREA



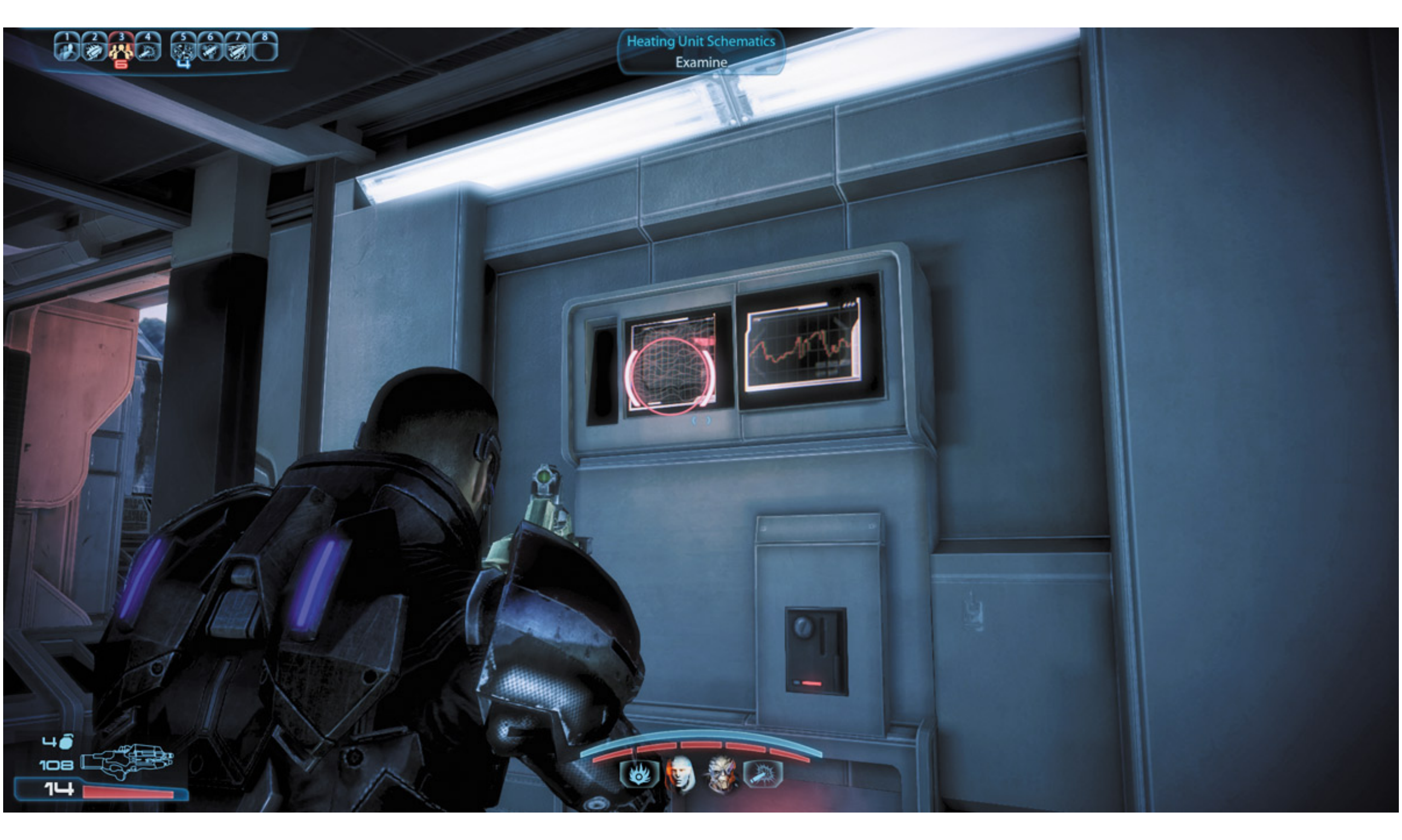
You start the operation near a landing pad with a fighter parked for maintenance on it. The area is crawling with Cerberus, so you'll need to eliminate them. The fighter on the pad actually makes for good cover from threats on the walkway and the unreachable ledges.

If you've got a sniper rifle or scoped weapon, this is a chance to do some distanced wet work. More aggressive players can use the crates on the walkways for cover as they advance into the base's upper level.





The enemy may try holing up in the lower level interior. If this is the case, watch out for turrets laid down by Combat Engineers. You'll be informed once the facility is cleared. Once that's done, scour the base for credits and supplies before moving onto the next step.



Heating Unit Schematics

Among the supplies you find at this facility, look at this control panel on the wall directly across from the objective. The Heating Unit Schematics found here are incredibly easy to miss. There's a salarian in the Citadel's Presidium Commons who could use this.

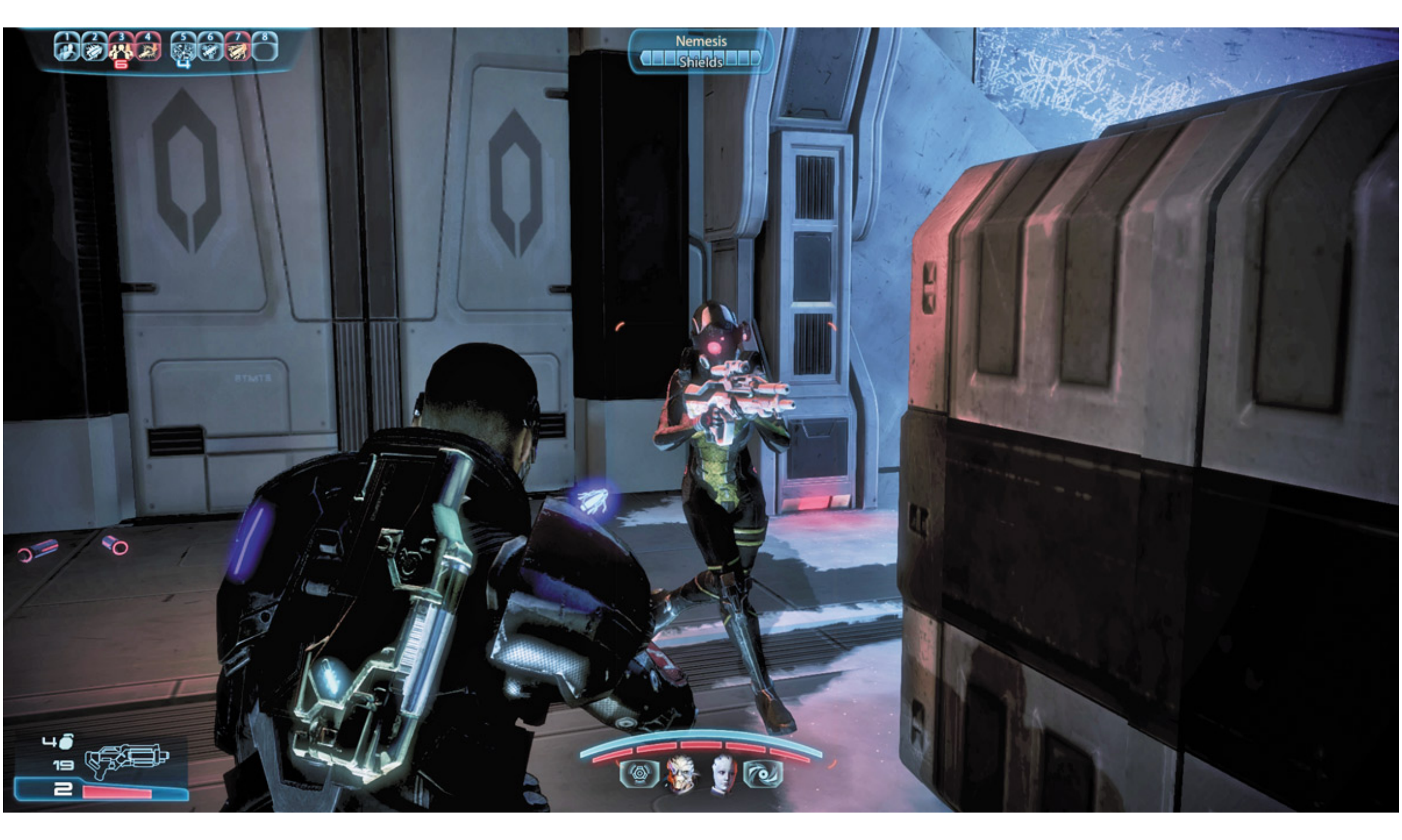
DISABLING THE DEFENSES

Once you've found everything on the facility, get to the designated control panel and choose wisely who you assign to cracking the security.

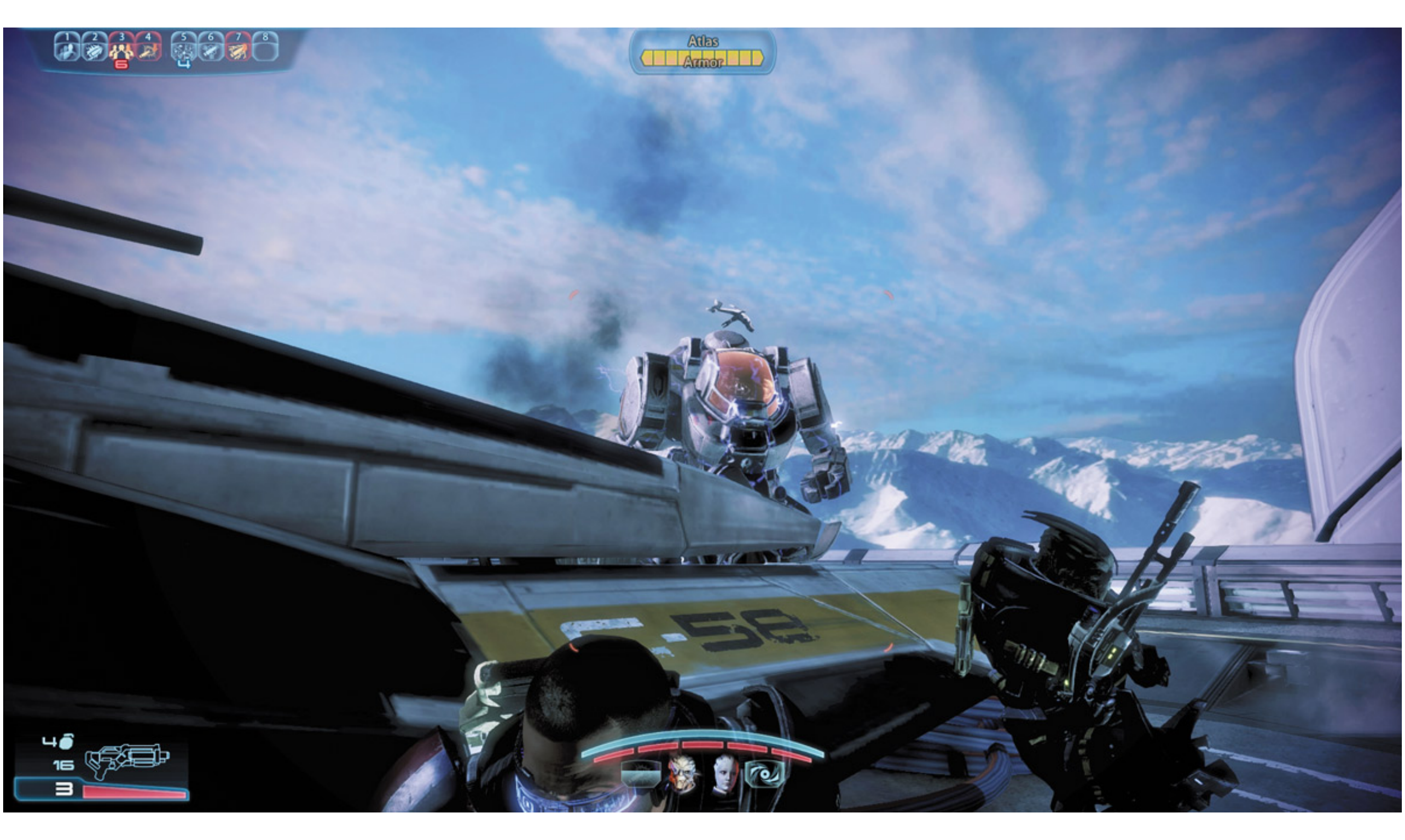
They will not be available for the ensuing firefight. Eventually, your chosen hacker will inform you that you need to activate a security panel simultaneously with them.

Once this is done, the defenses are down, but Cerberus doesn't quite give up. A large deployment of enemy troops arrives at the landing pad, and that is your next destination.

CLEANING UP



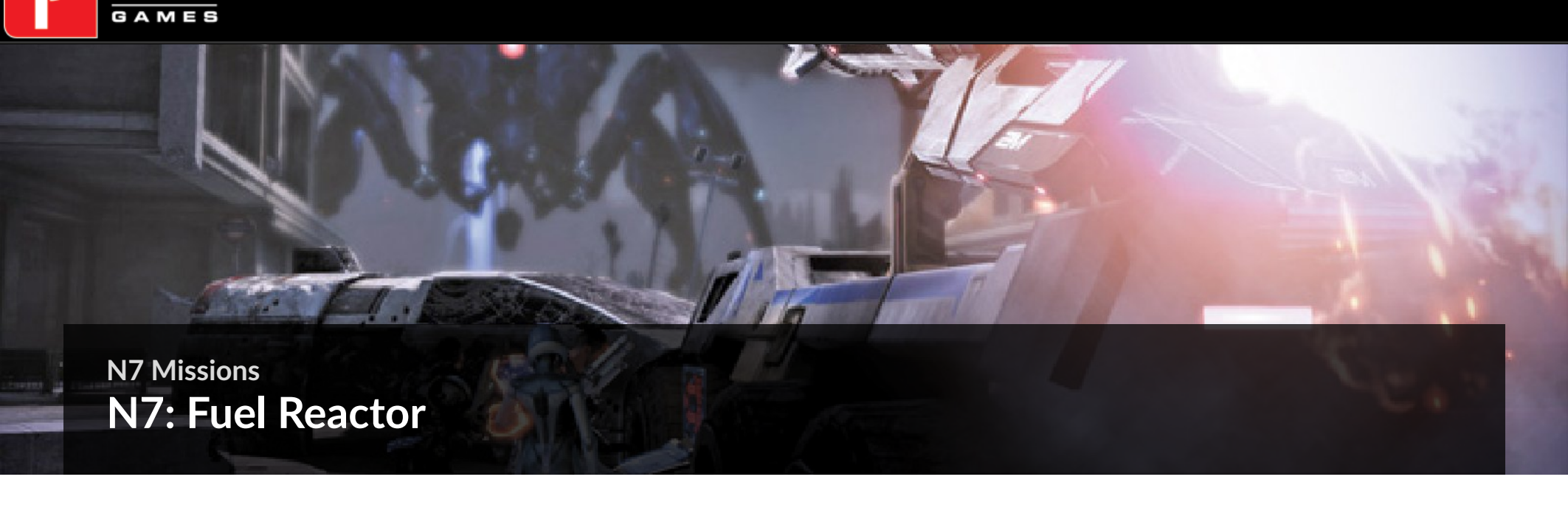
Watch out for Nemesis snipers on this phase of the battle. They are fast enough to get behind you and your squad, so make sure that once you find one, you don't lose track of them until they are dead.



Once you've silenced the enemy, you have one final challenge. An Atlas drops onto the landing pad.

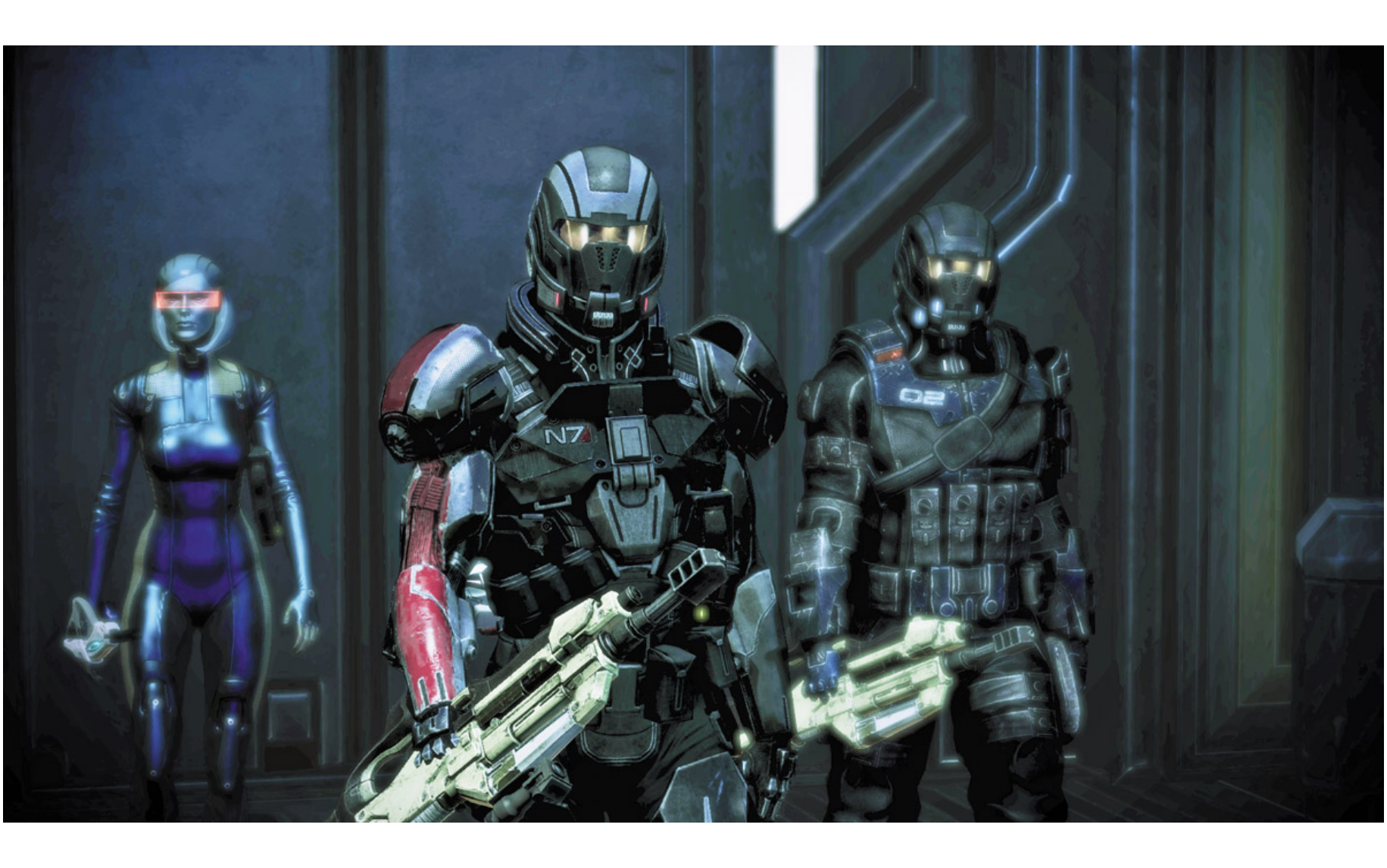
Fortunately, you've got plenty of good cover to use on the pad itself and on the walkways near the pad, making it relatively easy to stay at range and bring it down with heavy ordnance or powers.

Destroying it will complete the mission, so be certain you've found everything you need on the base before taking it down!



N7 Missions

N7: Fuel Reactor



With the reactor on Cyone compromised, fuel is not getting to ships desperately in need in this sector. Admiral Hackett already sent in a team led by Captain Riley to get it restarted, but they are going to need an assist.

This is where you come in. You need to restart the reactor and figure out what exactly shut it down in the first place.

MISSION BRIEFING

Availability: Available after "Priority: Perseus Veil"

Location: Silean Nebula—Kypladon System—Cyone

Battlegrounds: Of all the N7 missions thus far, this is the most complex and possibly the most dangerous.

The reactor facility is a mazelike series of walkways that are connected via ladders and ramps; not every section of the facility is connected, so you may have to take a winding route to reach some areas.

As there isn't a lot of room to maneuver, weapons that take advantage of that are a big help. Any area-of-effect powers can help flush out hostiles, but it also can mean you will pin yourself down in a bad spot.

With aggressive hostiles, this can prove fatal. Be attentive to your surroundings, and know where you can fall back to on a moment's notice.

Consequence Overview: There is a chance for Paragon or Renegade points here. You can either send a squadmate to support the other team or leave them hanging on their own.

Make a thorough sweep of the area to avoid missing out on the Medical Treatment Plan that a doctor at Huerta Memorial Hospital could use to save a patient.

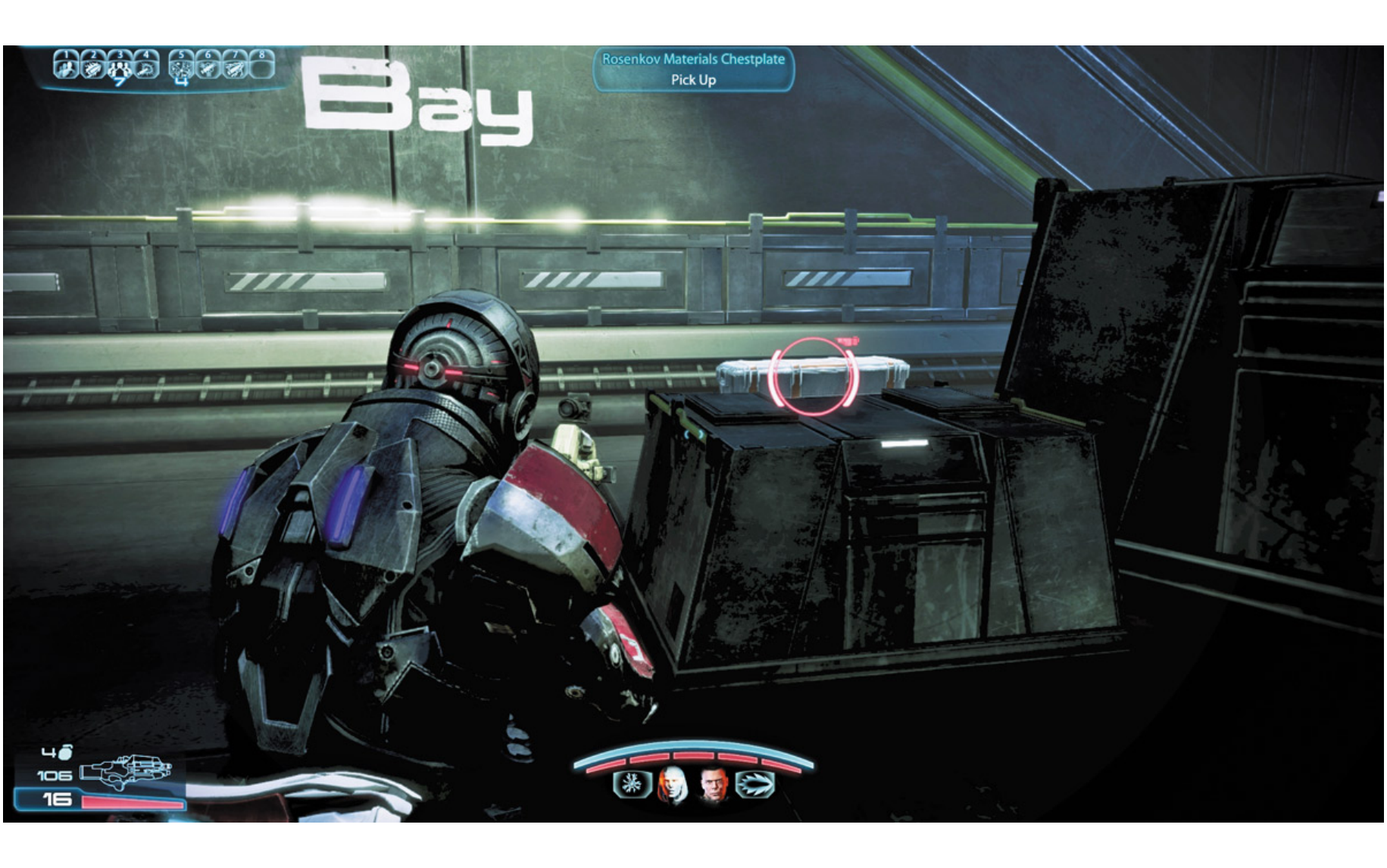
NOTE

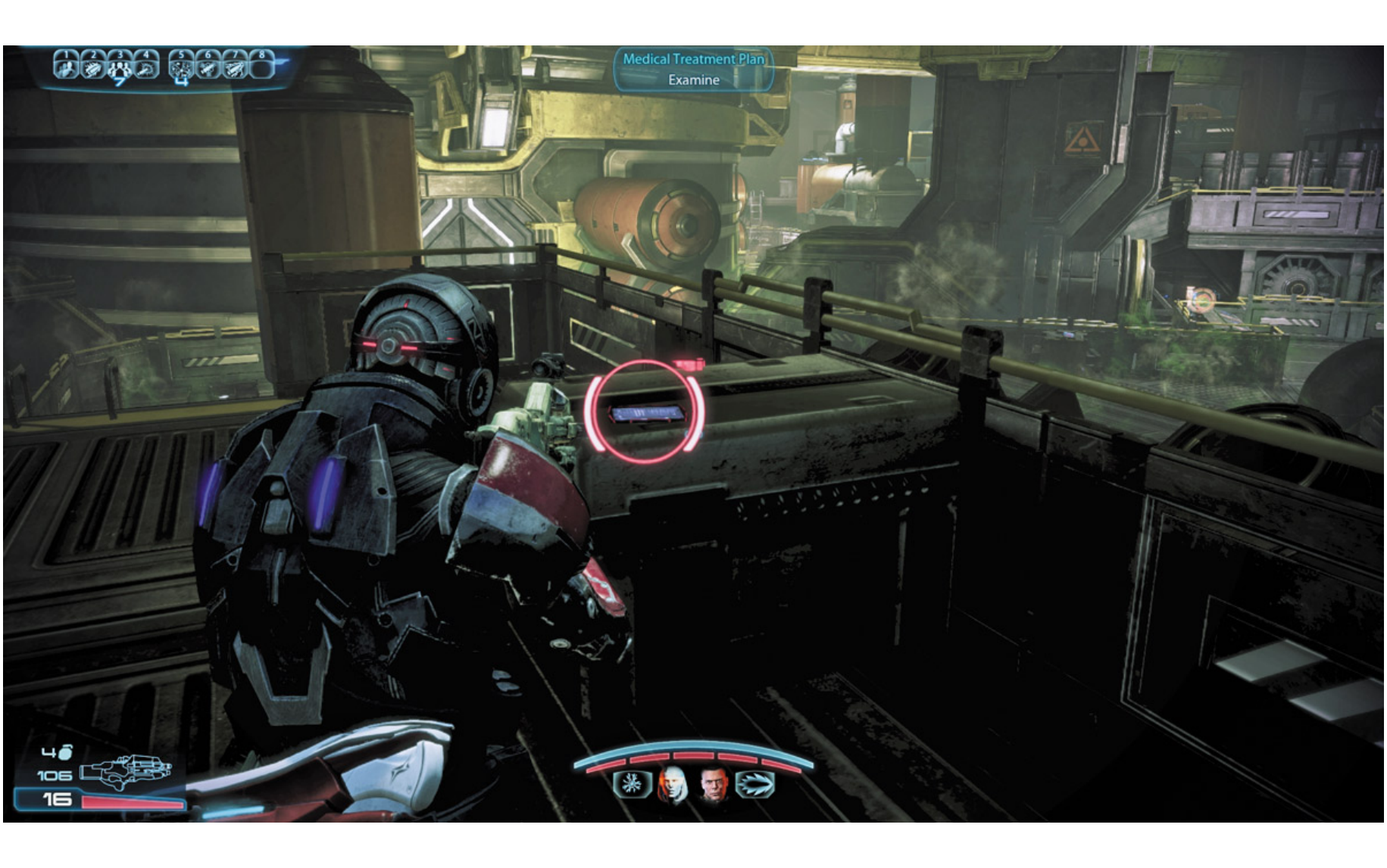
This map is the same as the Reactor multiplayer map.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

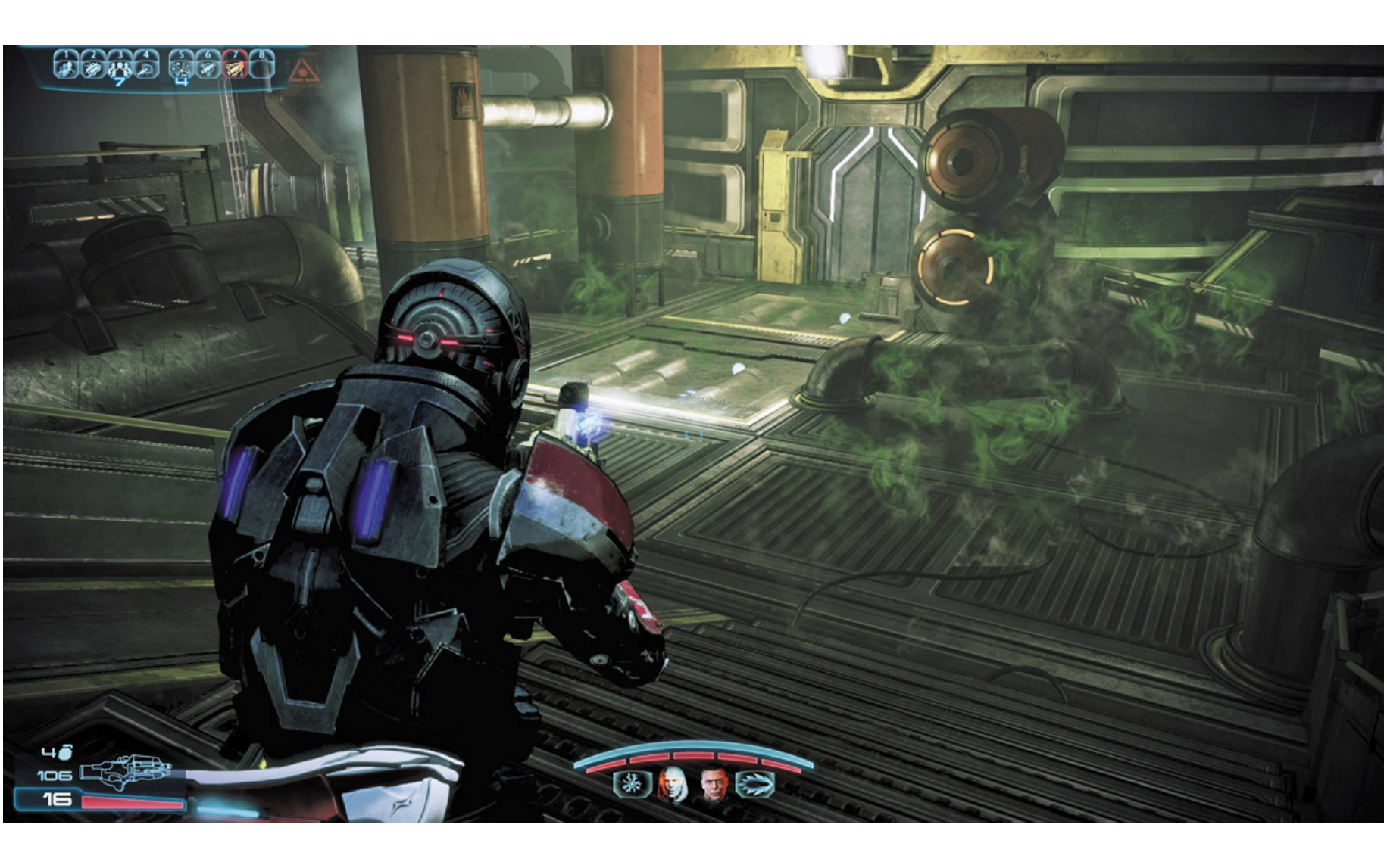
Credits: 3000 (x2); 4,000	Medi-Gel
Medical Treatment Plan (See "Citadel: Chemical Treatment," *Hub Missions*)	Rosenkov Materials Chestplate

RECON





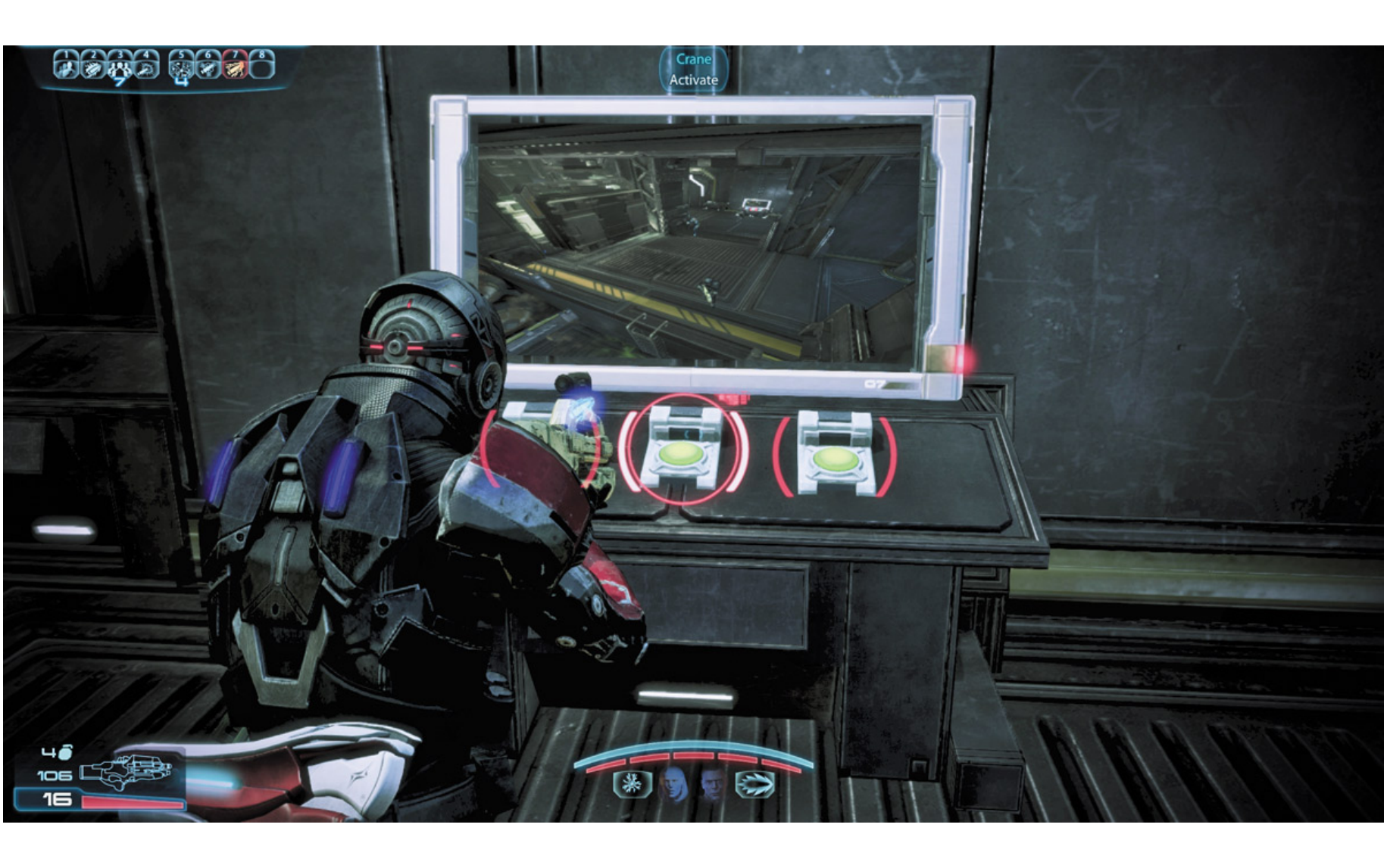
As soon as you arrive in the Reactor, you're greeted by Nyrek, a turian member of the advance team. Everything's all quiet. Take the time to do some preliminary recon on the surroundings, picking up a Rosenkov Materials Chestplate and a Medical Treatment Plan.

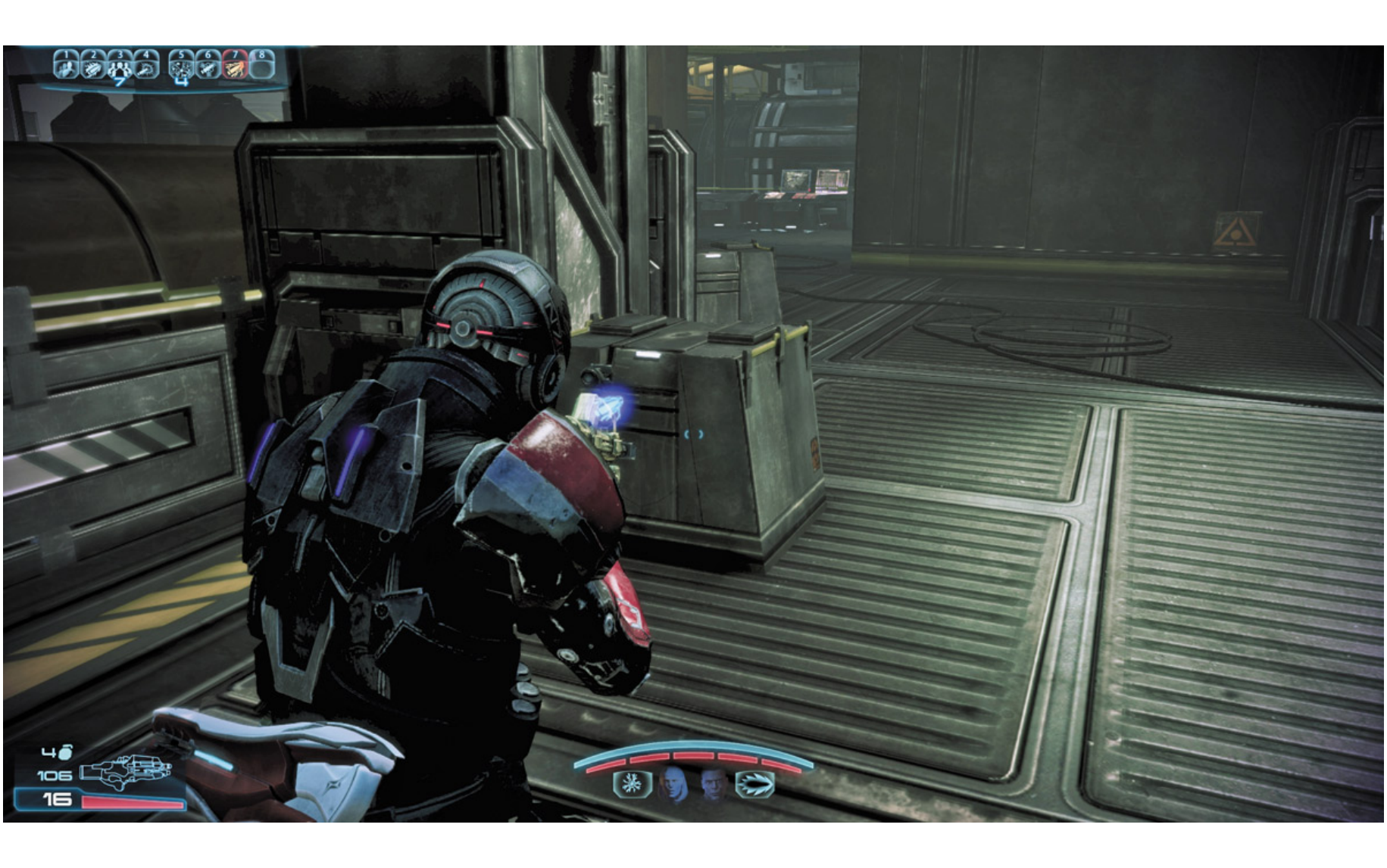


Be careful where you go for now. The ramps leading to the reactor housing are filled with radioactive clouds that ignore your shields and sap your health quickly. Talk to Captain Riley when you're ready.

GOING DEEPER

Captain Riley's team will need to split up from yours to activate the other reactor in the facility. One of her men will move a crate to allow you access deeper into the facility.





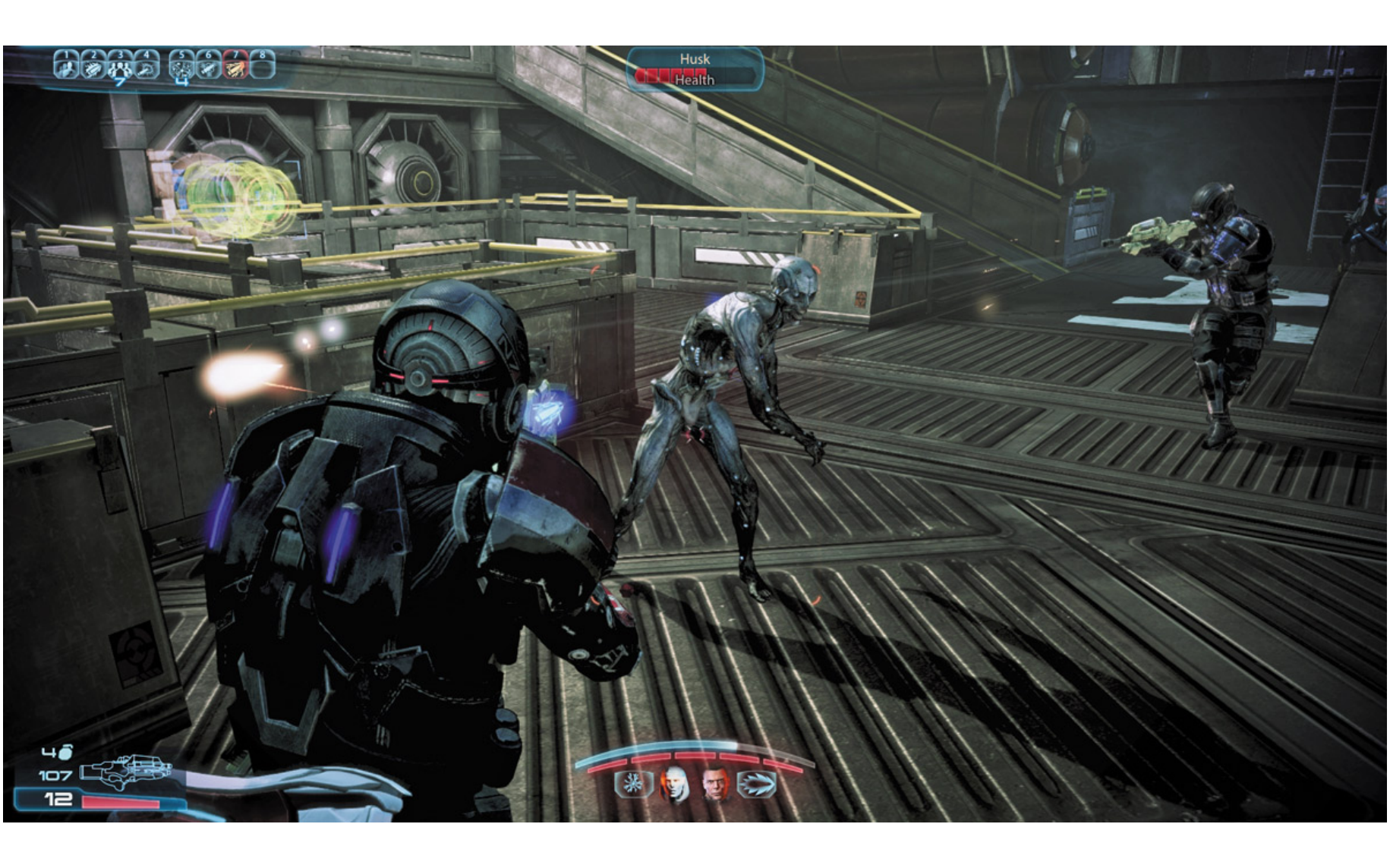
Look for a control panel that handles moving the heavy crates that block your path. The controls are simple enough. The center button picks up or puts down a crate. The left and right switches move the crane. You need to move two containers to the right to proceed.

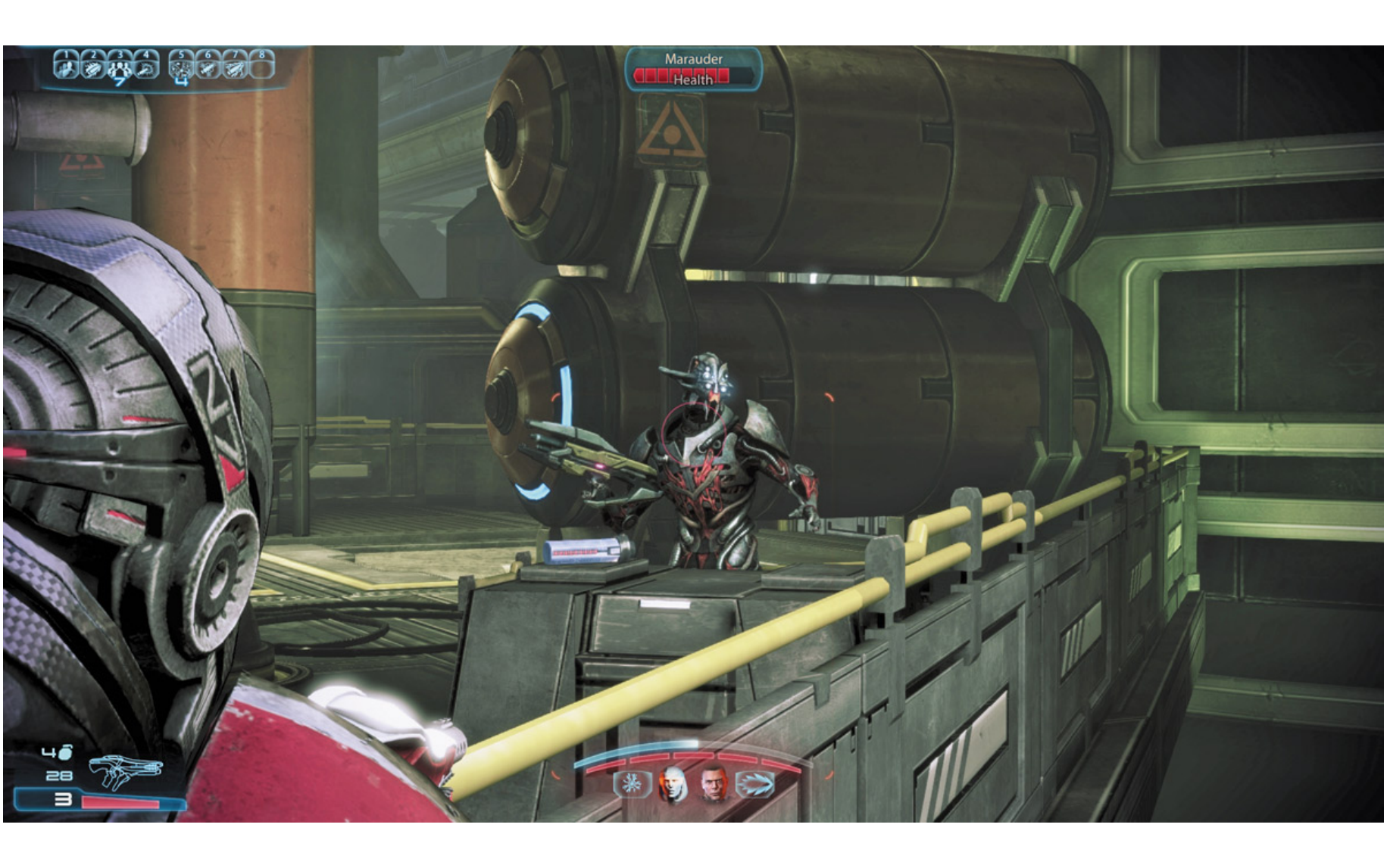
Once past the containers, Riley calls in that she can see the fuel rod controls, but radiation is blocking access. You need to vent the radiation away before you can safely access the controls.

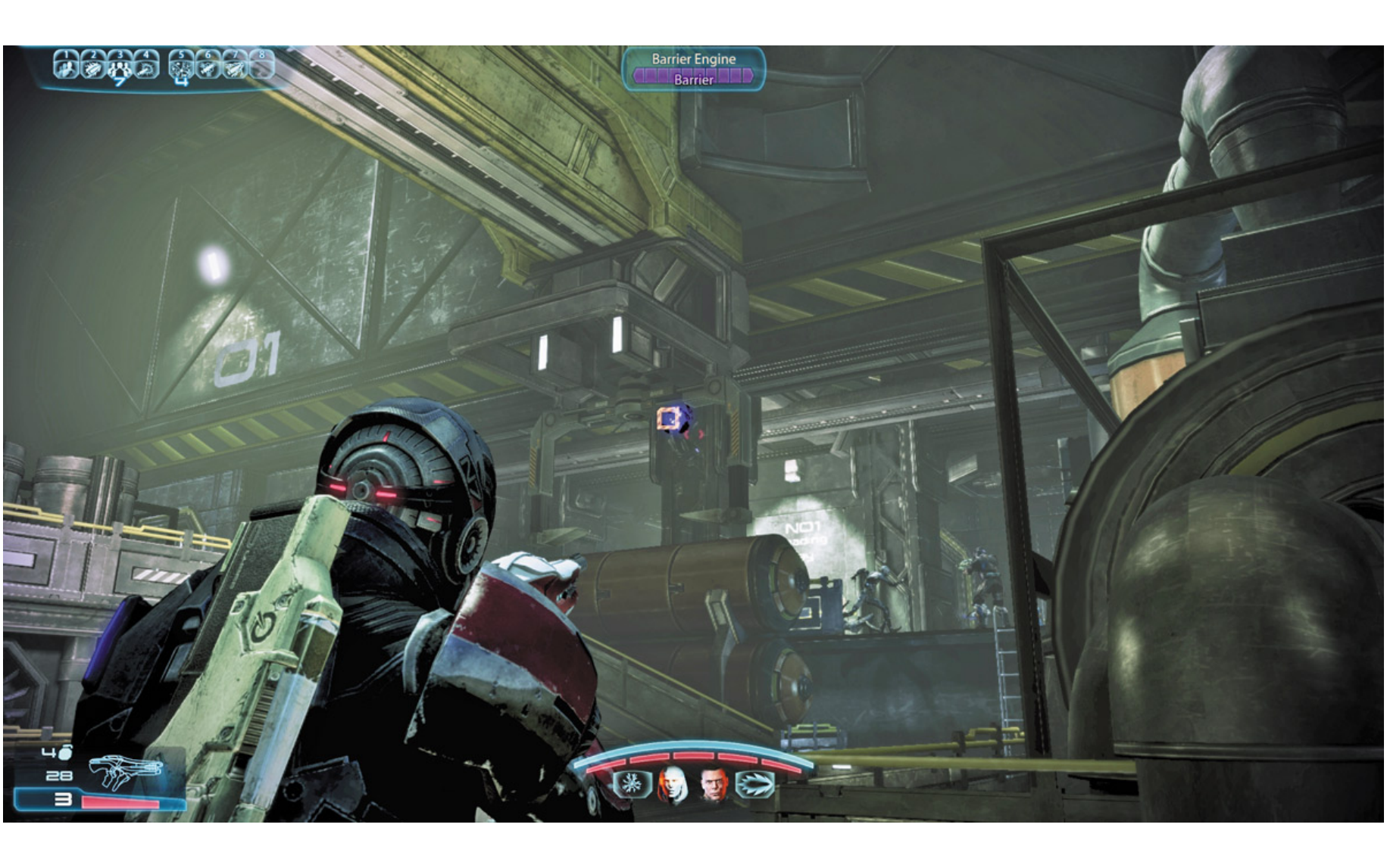
The vent controls are very close to where the containers once blocked your path, but take this time to explore the other parts of the facility that are not irradiated.

After you vent the radiation, the path to the fuel rod controls is safe. Explore the formerly irradiated areas, then activate the controls.

REAPER AMBUSH



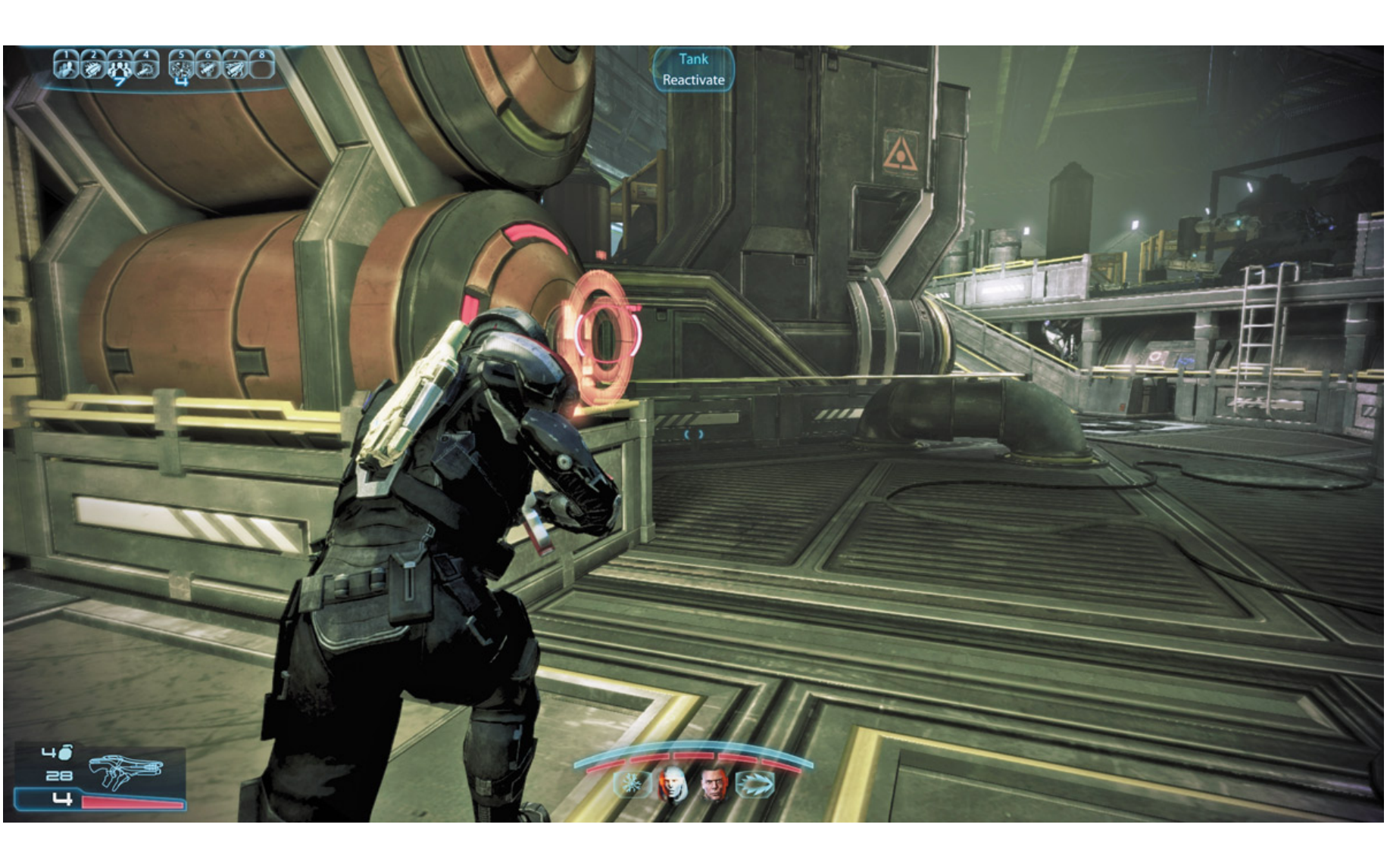


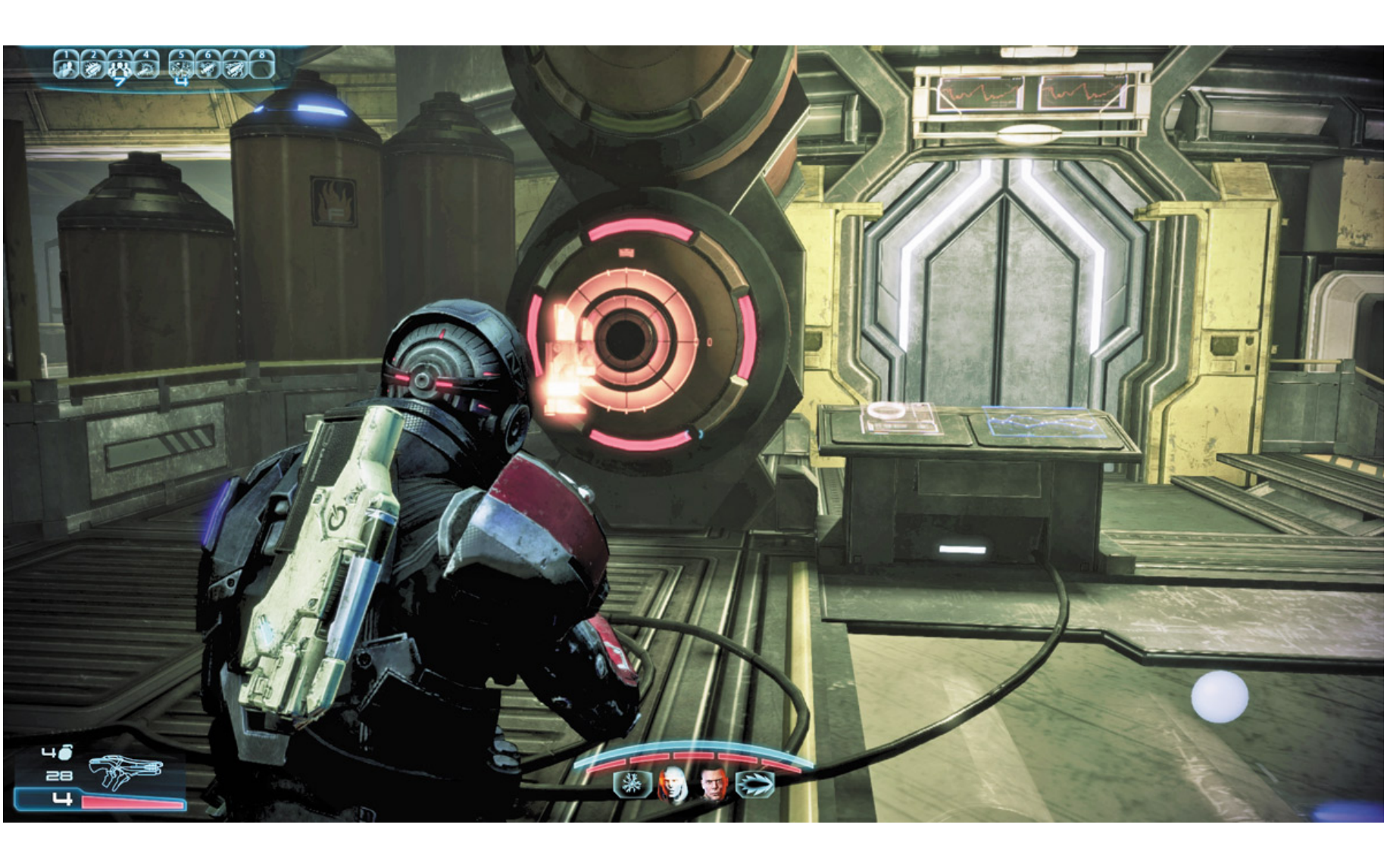


The moment you unlock the fuel rods, Cortez informs you that other movement has been detected in the facility. You're beset by Marauders and Husks.

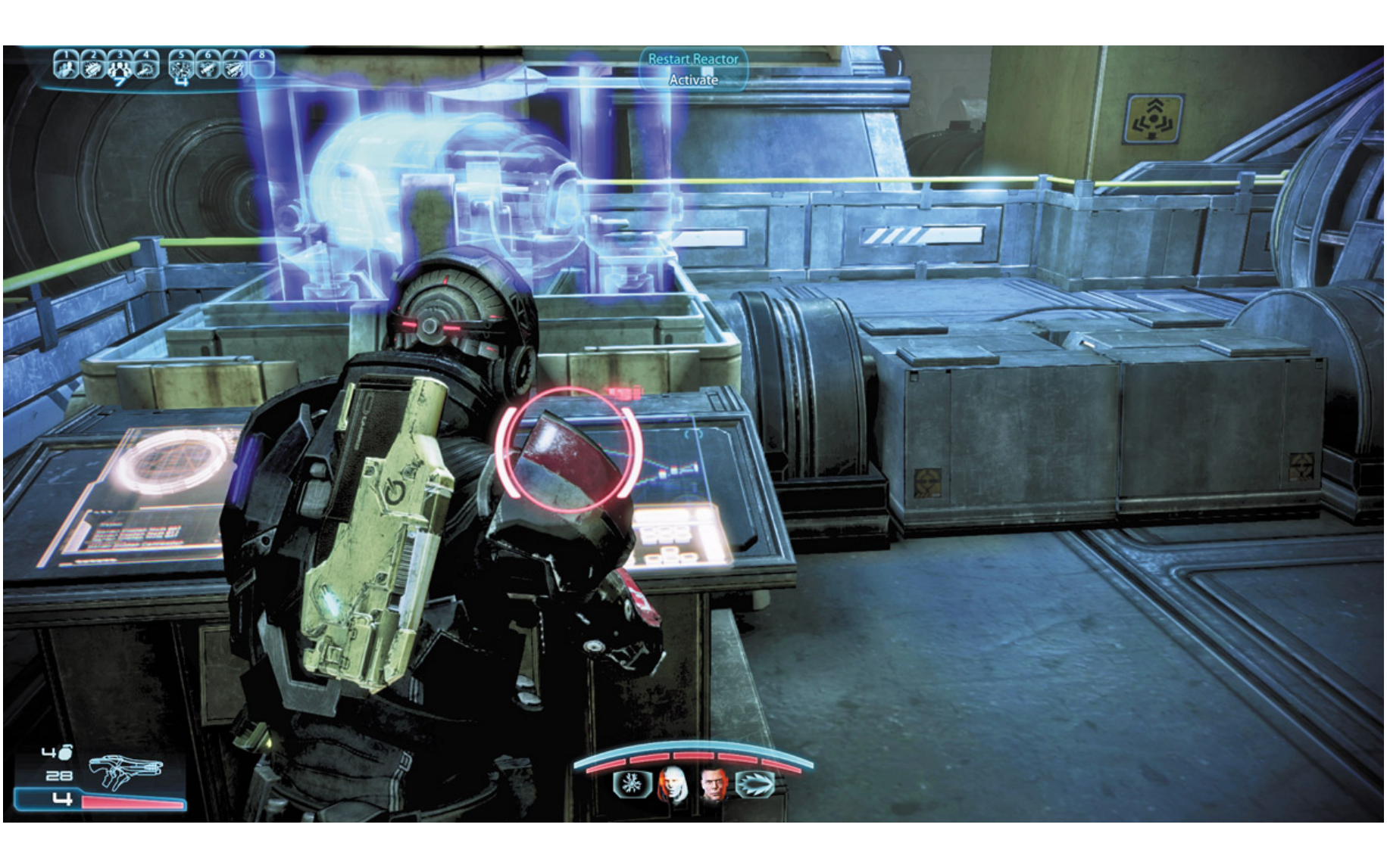
Barrier engines activate on the walls, granting your enemies extra protection. Take those out as soon as you see them!

RESTARTING

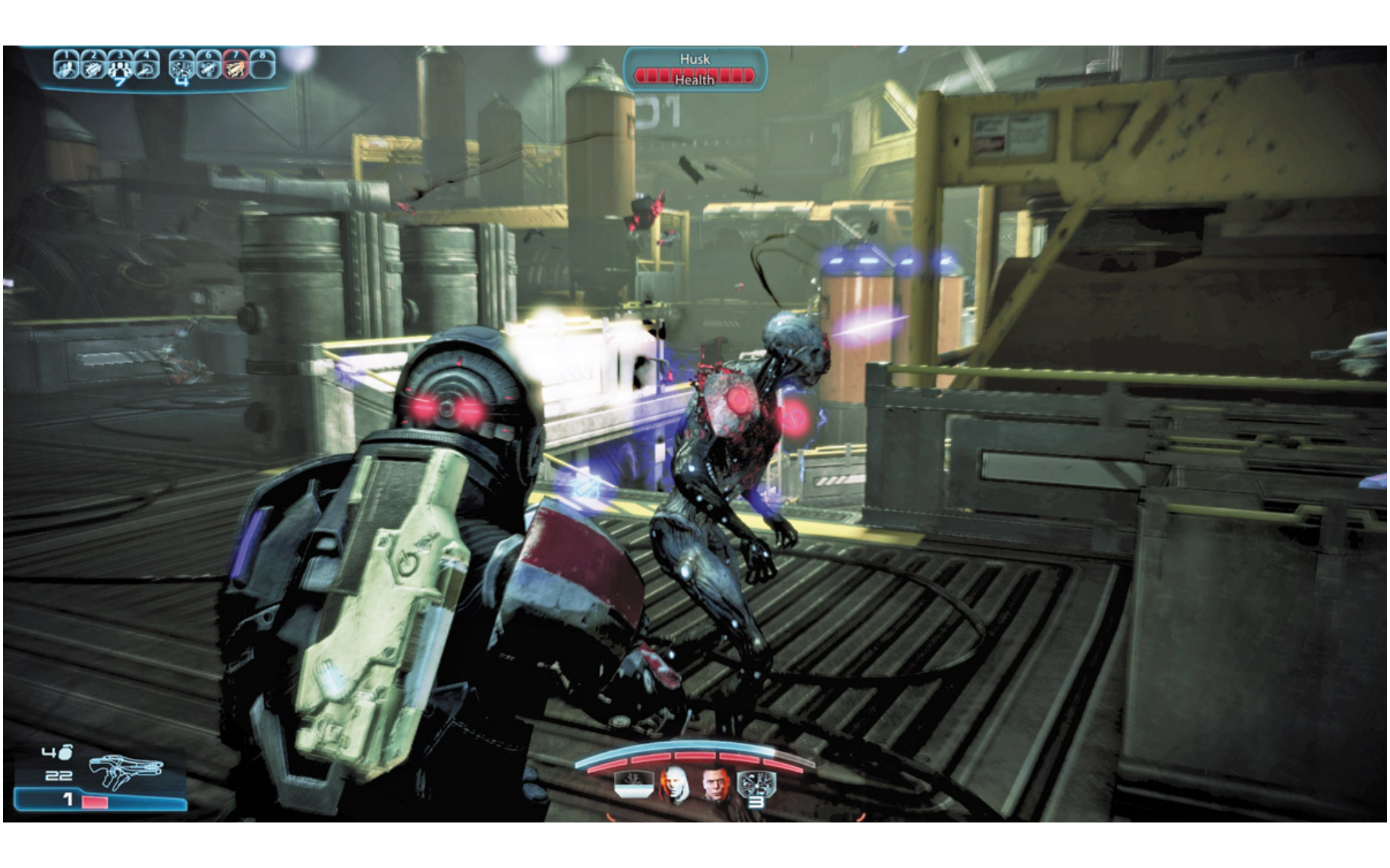




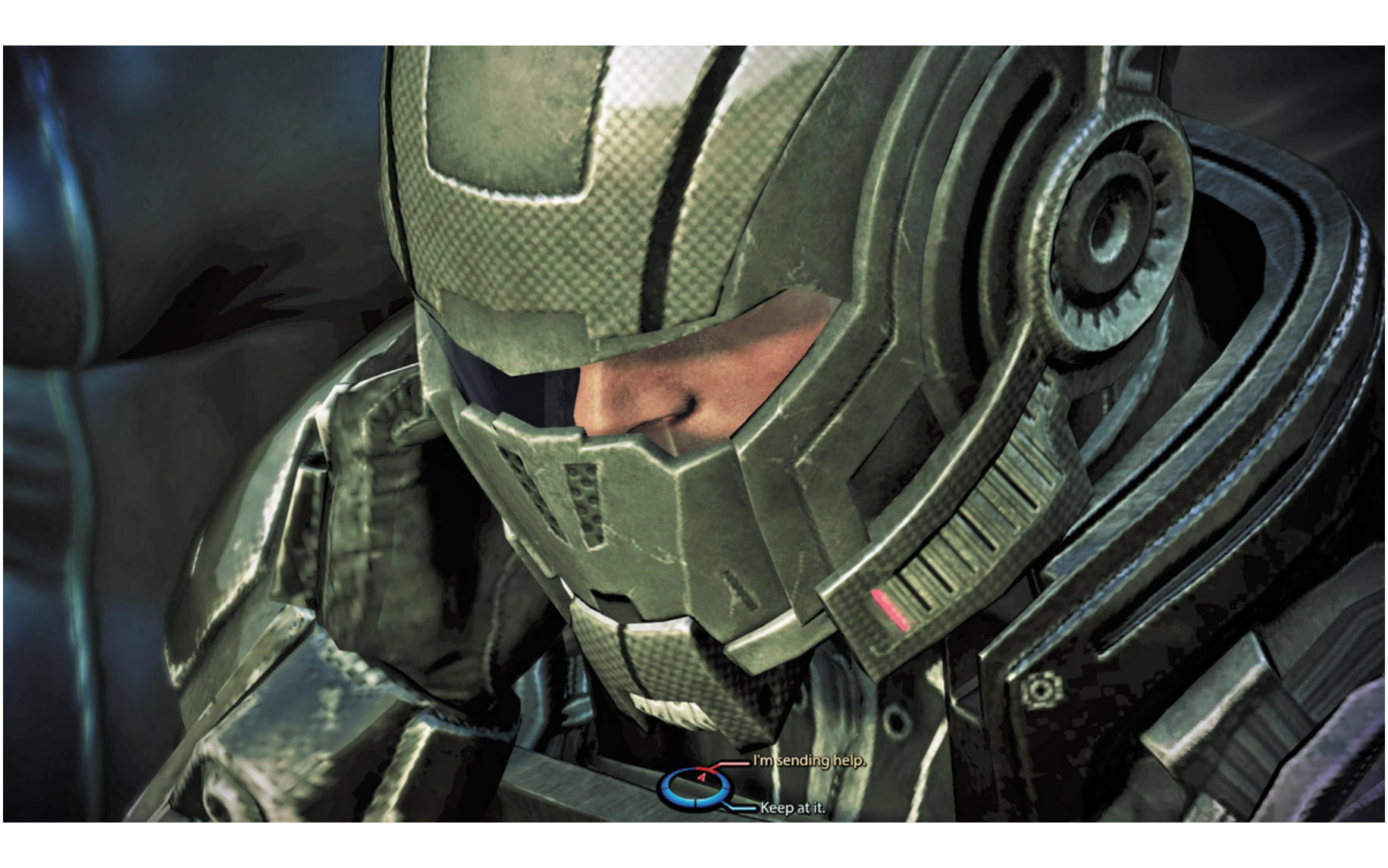
After clearing out the hostiles, the reactors fail to restart. You need to seal the moderator tanks before a restart is possible, and this means going deeper into the facility. There are two tanks to seal.



With the tanks sealed, the restart controls become active. Make sure you've located everything you need, and get ready for a fight.



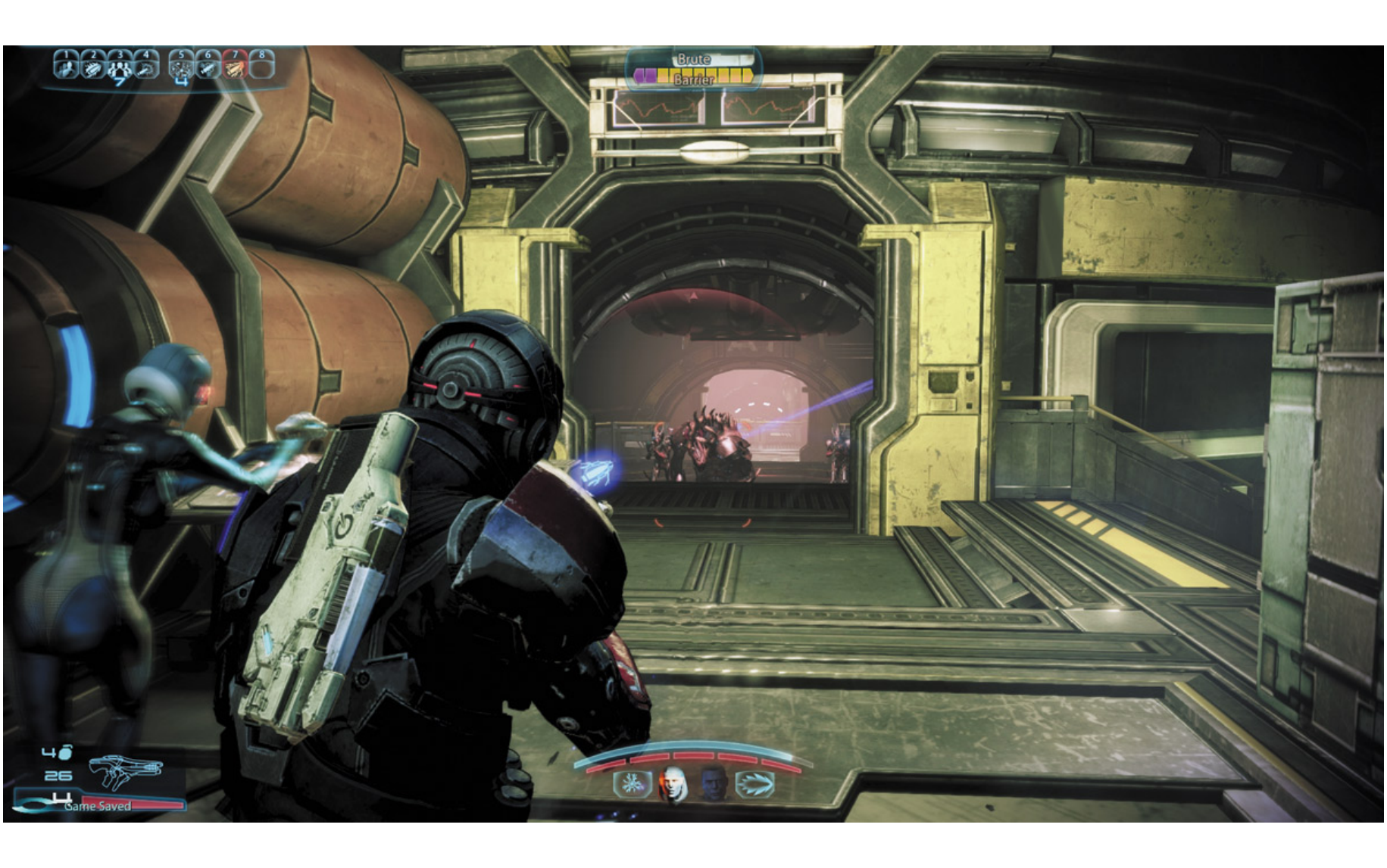
Marauders and Husks drop in from above, and a series of barrier engines activate near the reactor controls. Take them out quickly, then turn your attention to the Husks. The sooner they die, the sooner you can concentrate on the Marauders.

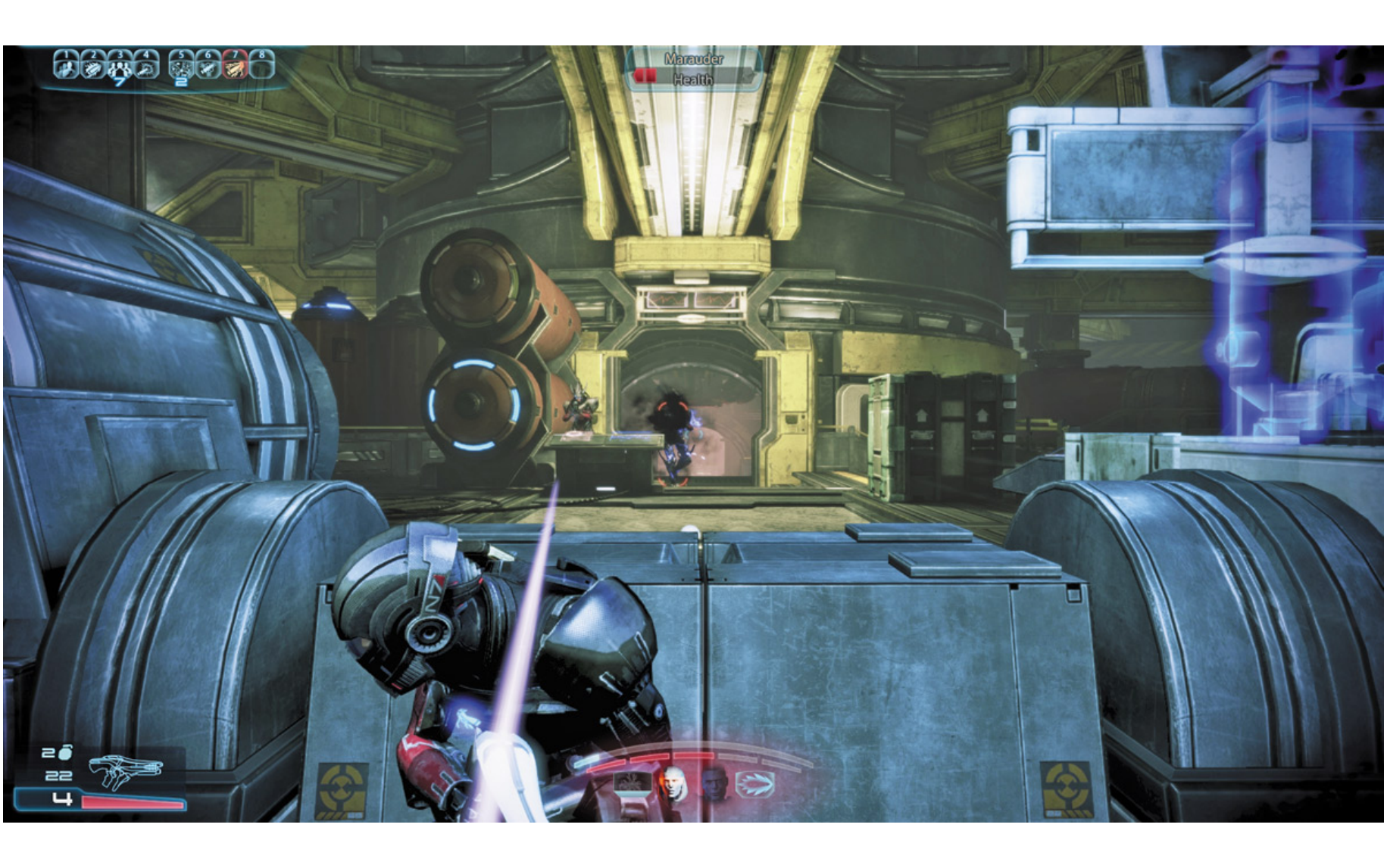


Once you deal with this wave, Captain Riley calls in. Her situation is desperate. You can offer her support for Paragon points, or you can tell her to soldier on and gain Renegade points.

If you do send support, the next fight can get a little tricky, so pick who you send off wisely.

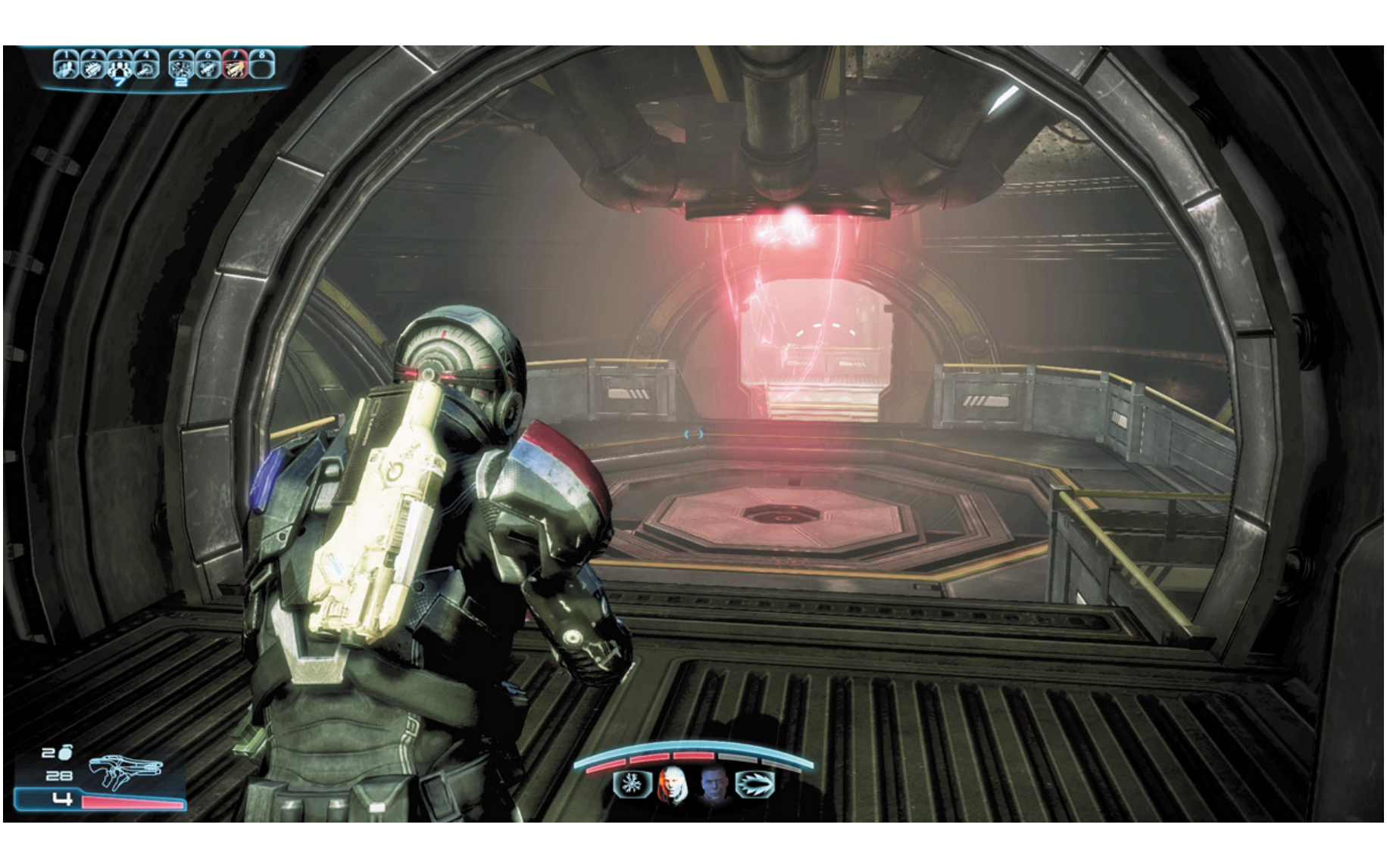
THE CORE

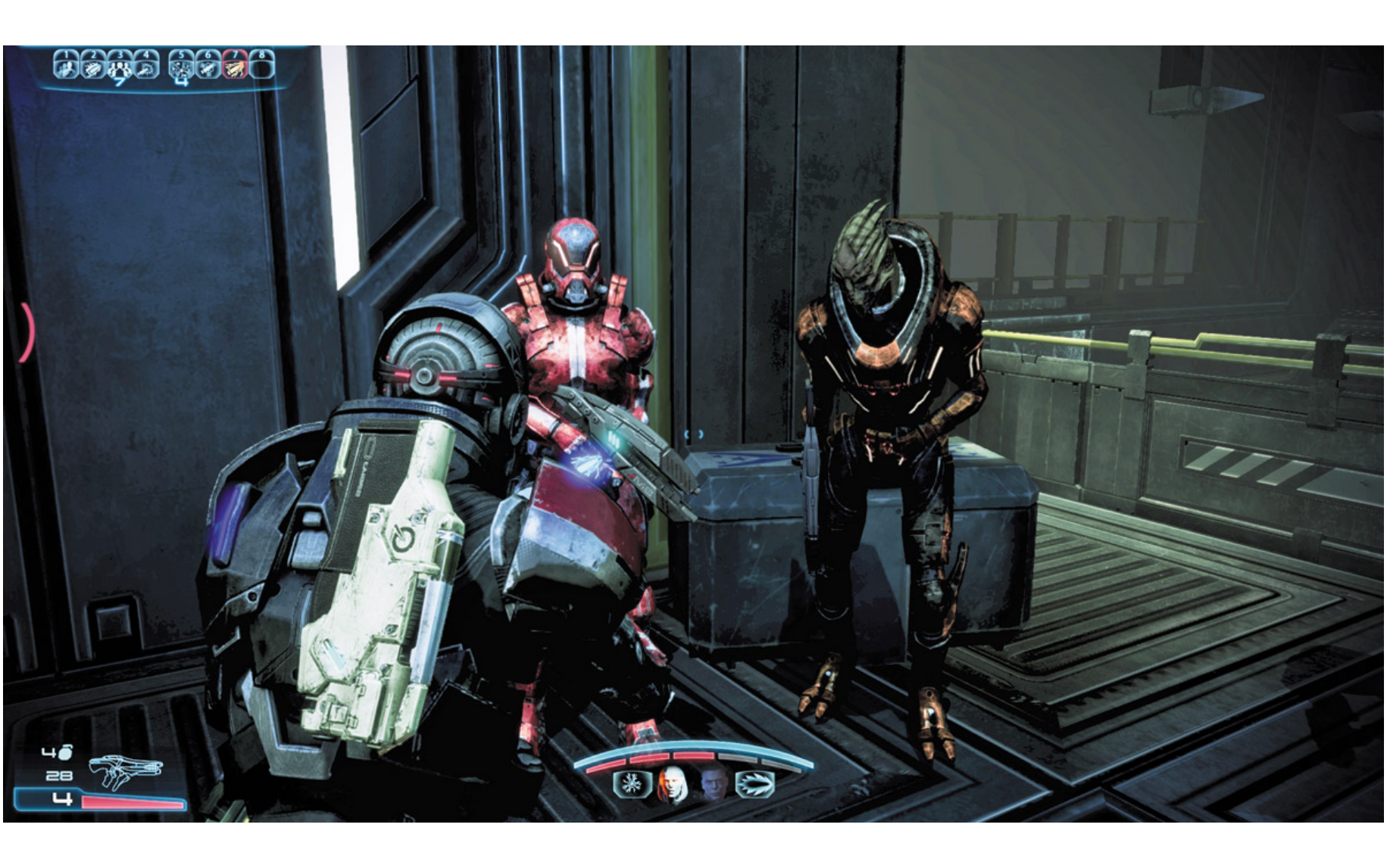




Whatever you choose to do, the reactor core opens, revealing another ambush led by a Brute enjoying the benefits of a barrier engine mounted inside the core.

Try to take out the engine before the Brute comes charging out after you, then deal with the Marauders inside.



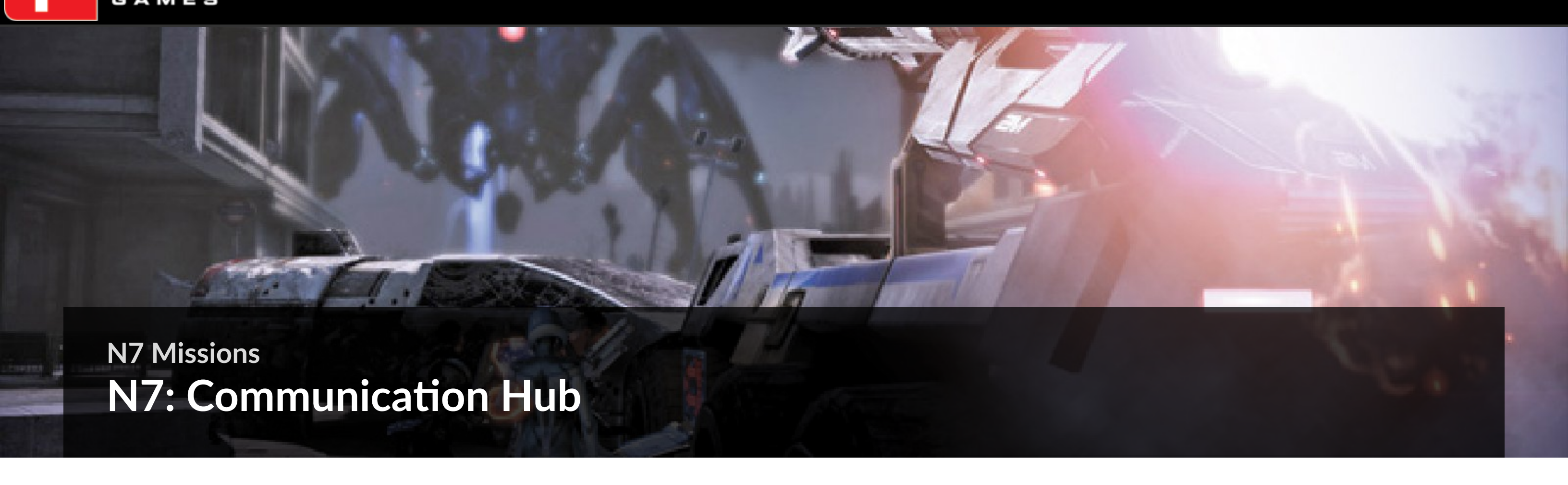


Once you've dealt with this final ambush, Cortez radios that he can't raise the other team, regardless of what you choose to do. Finalize the reactor restart, then head to the pickup point.

If you sent support, you'll find that Captain Riley and Nyrek made it out okay, though they're a little worse for wear.

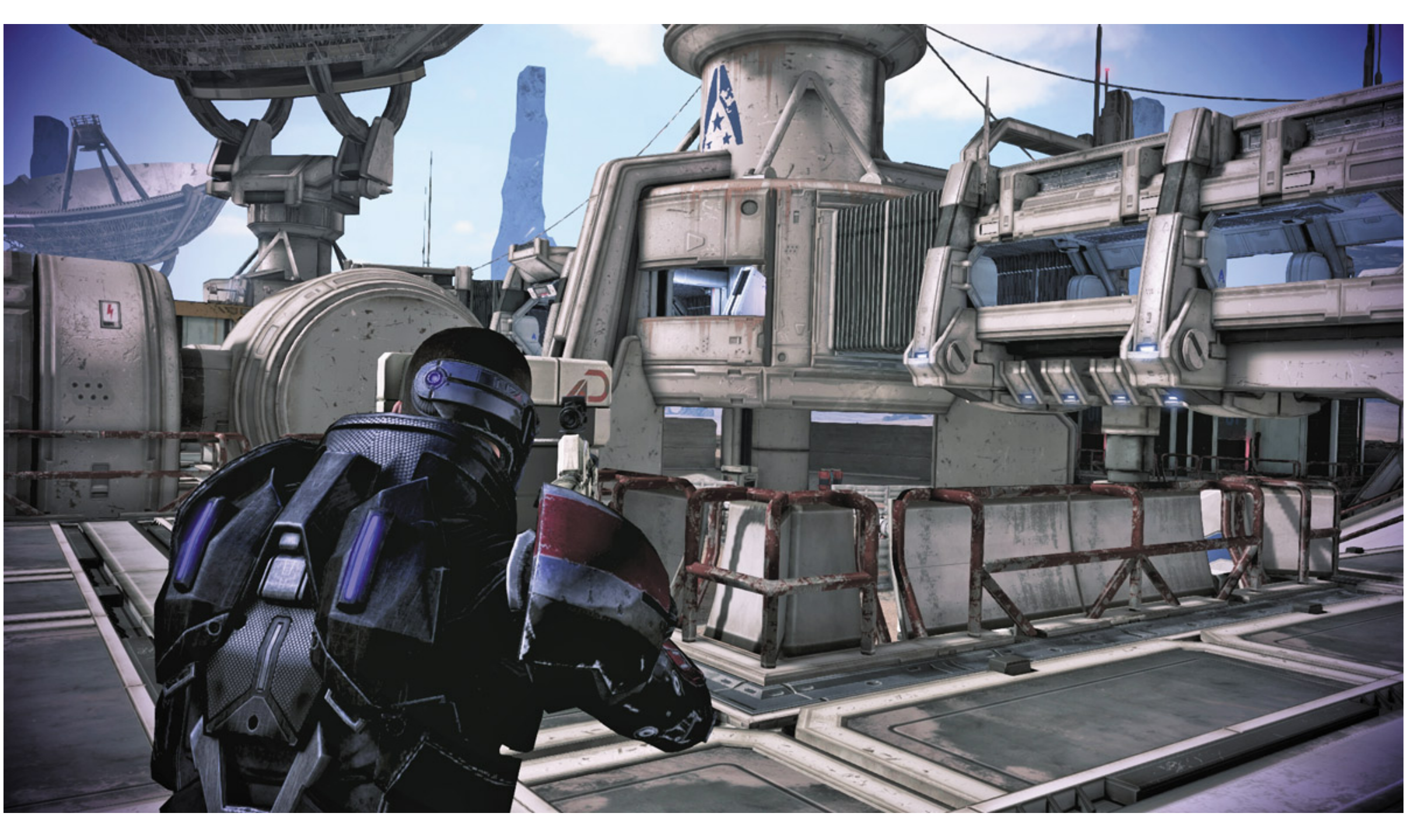
NOTE

Not having sent a henchmen to help Captain Riley will result in her death and Nyrek will be the only survivor of her squad.



N7 Missions

N7: Communication Hub



In retaliation for recent losses, and perhaps hoping to regain the edge on the Alliance forces, Cerberus has attacked a major communication relay facility on the planet Ontarom.

Admiral Hackett needs Shepard on-site to secure the facility before Cerberus lifts valuable intel from the network.

There's a catch: They are already in the system, and the only thing holding them back is a lone civilian operator who is in hiding —Grace Sato.

MISSION BRIEFING

Availability : Available after "Priority: Horizon"

Location: Kepler Verge—Newton System—Ontarom

Battlegrounds: While not as involved as the Fuel Reactor, the Comm Hub is a large and very wide-open map that rewards excellent sniping for both sides.

The central pipeworks clearing is surrounded by a series of walkways and overlooked by the main communications building, which is the tallest point on the map but has only limited visibility on the pipeworks directly below.

The interior of the building is not complex, but it does limit your mobility somewhat. Worse yet, even though it provides ample views on the areas surrounding it, that also means that anyone on the outside can spot you.

A Nemesis can easily put you or a squadmate down from across the whole map if you're lacking in attention or reflexes.

This mission will have you running to different computer stations to disable hacking attempts, and usually the enemy is going to be there in force before you.

If Tali is an available squadmate, bring her for her Sabotage power. It is especially effective on Combat Engineers, as it turns their turrets against them!

Consequence Overview: There is a chance for Paragon and Renegade points on this mission. The fearful tech supporting you on this mission is barely able to give you the info you need.

Your choice of words will determine how she gets through the situation.

Don't miss the Cerberus Codes on one of the computers outside the facility, near the large antennae.

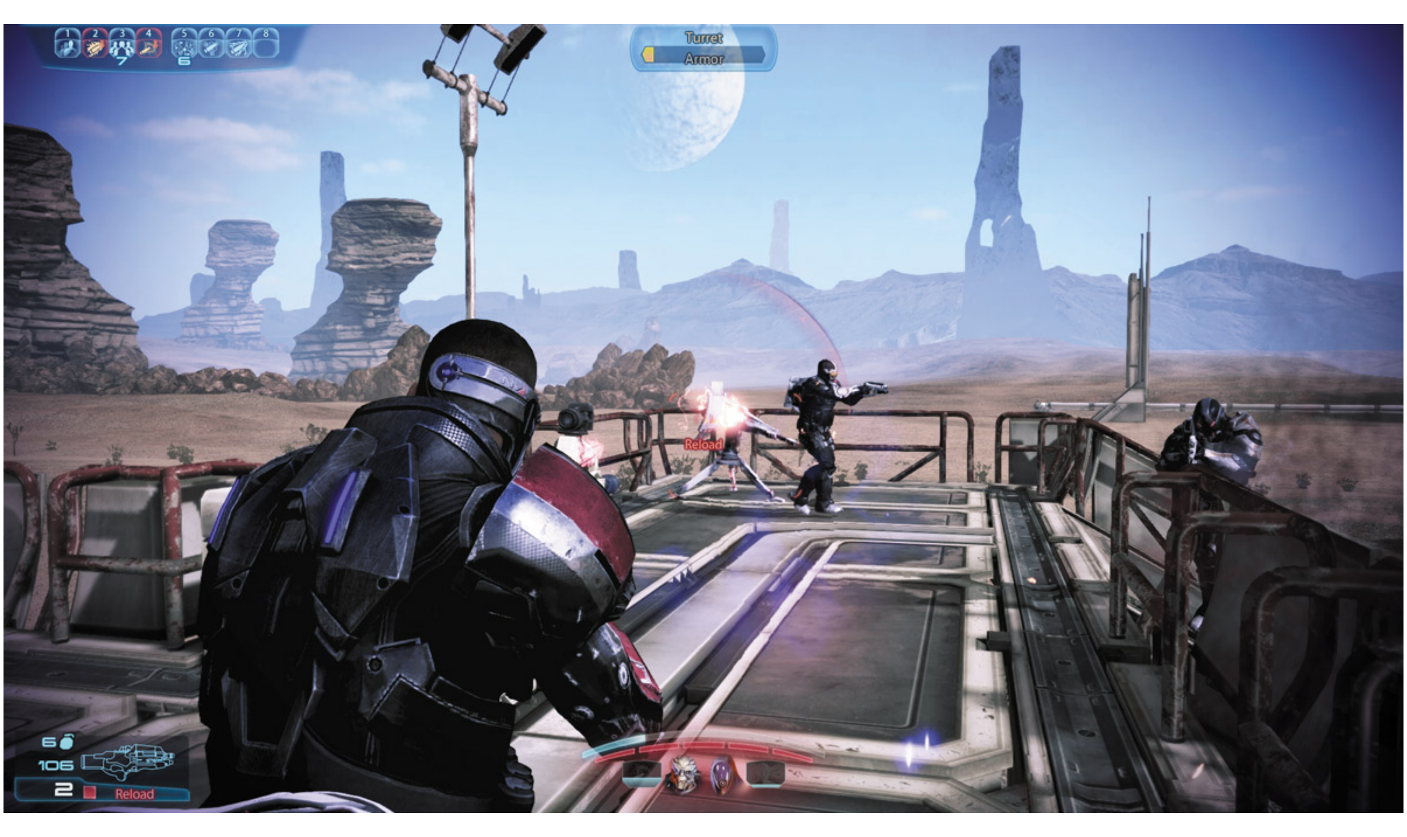
NOTE

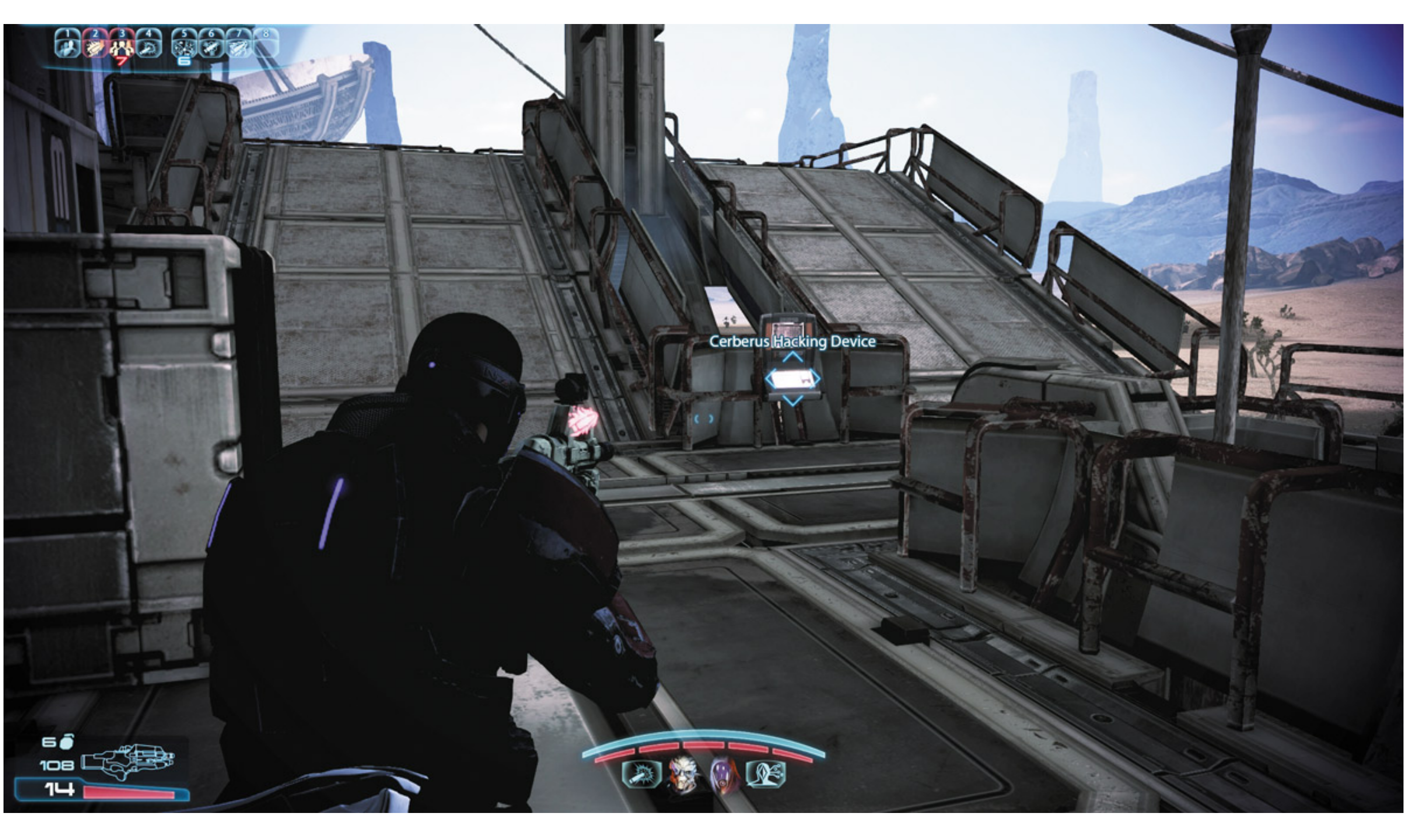
This map is the same as the Dagger multiplayer map.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Ariake Technologies Greaves	Credits: 4,000; 3,000
Cerberus Codes (See "Citadel: Cerberus Ciphers", Hub Missions)	Medi-Gel (x4)

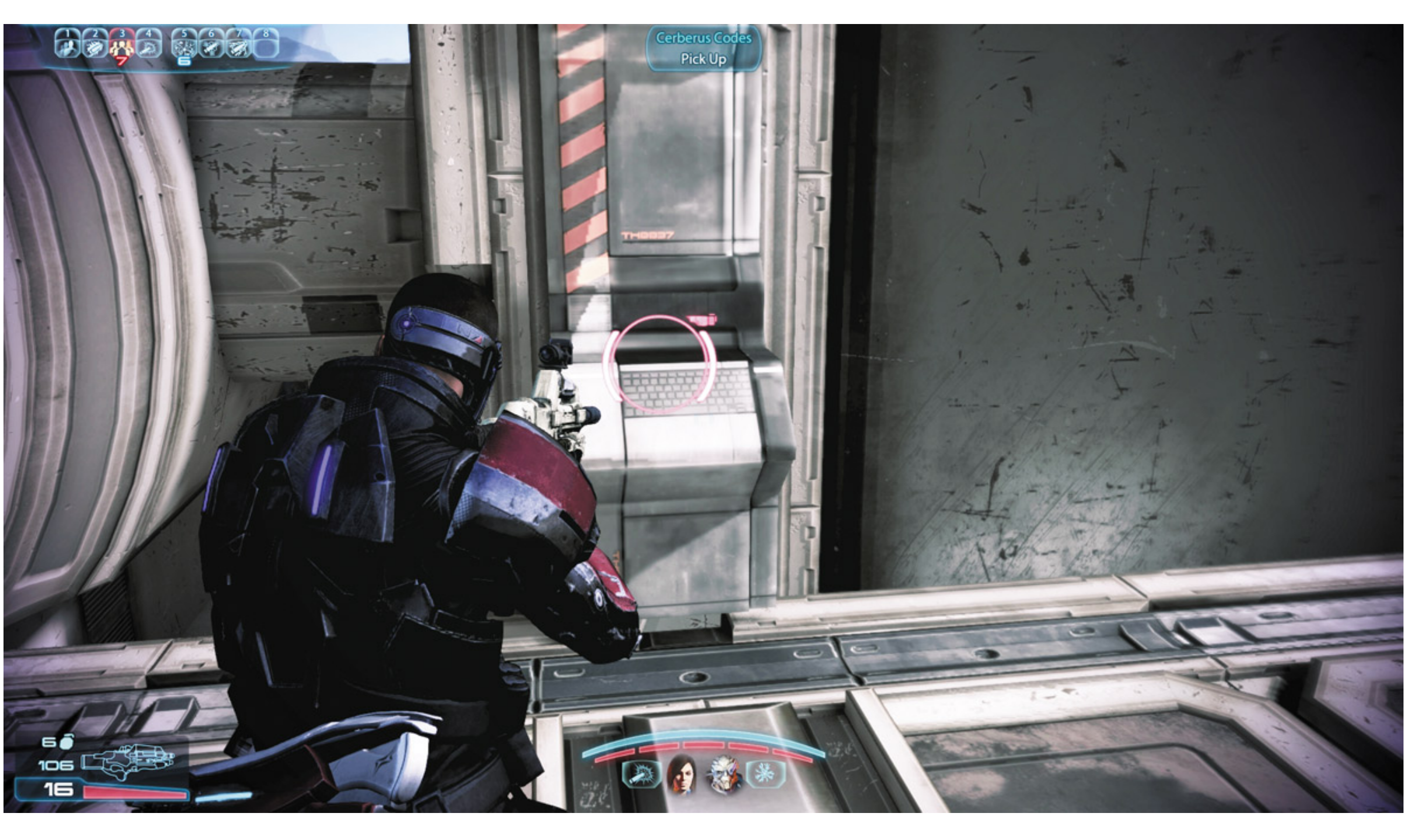
INITIAL CONTACT





As soon as you drop into the facility, Cerberus goes on the attack. Grace Sato puts up a nav point for you to follow to disable the hacking attempt.

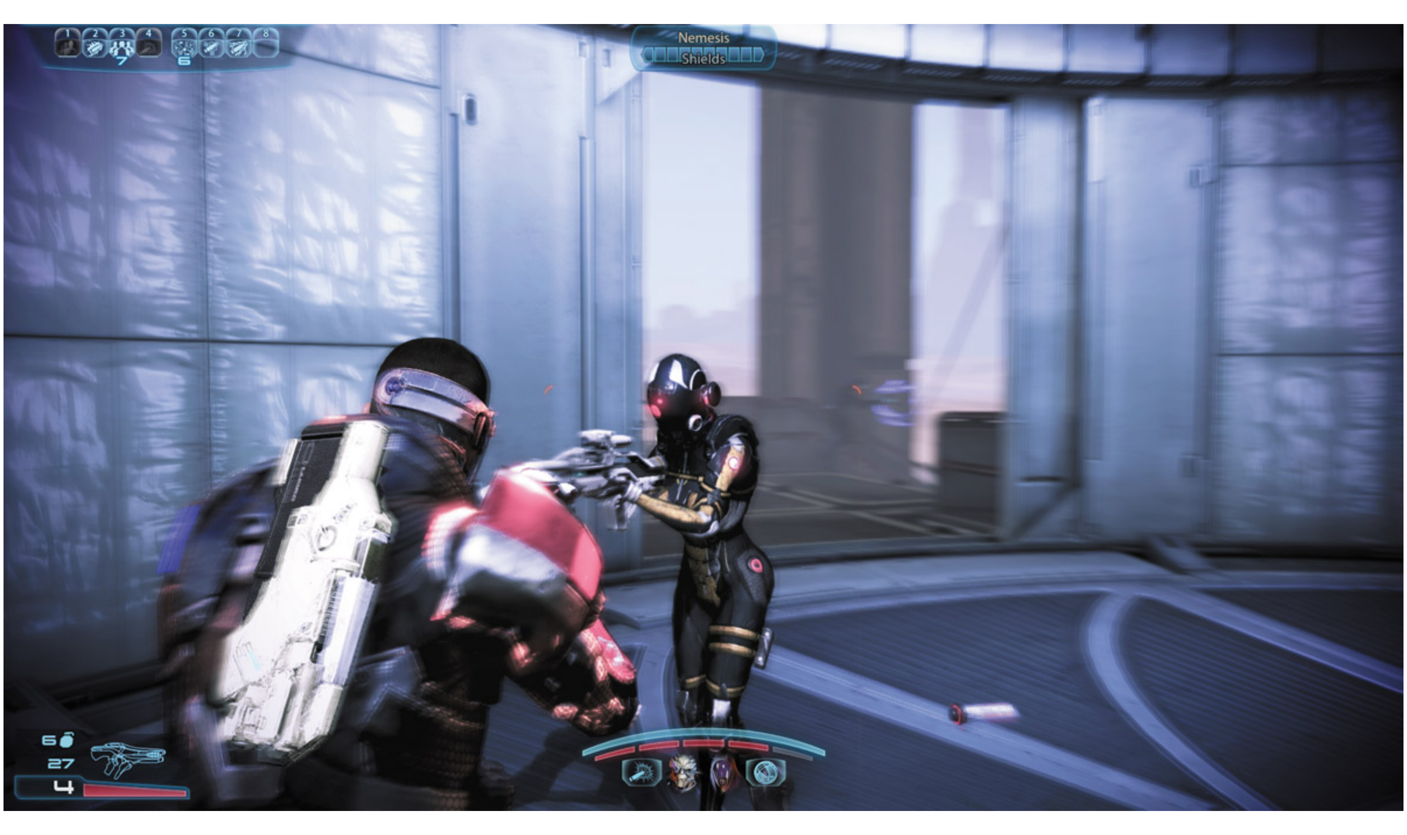
Clear out the enemy first, as once you've killed all the Cerberus troops in the area, you get free rein of the facility to search for all the hidden items, as well as the Cerberus Codes for a side quest!



Cerberus Codes

The codes can be easy to miss. For reference, it's near the second Cerberus Hacking Device you disable.

SECOND DEVICE

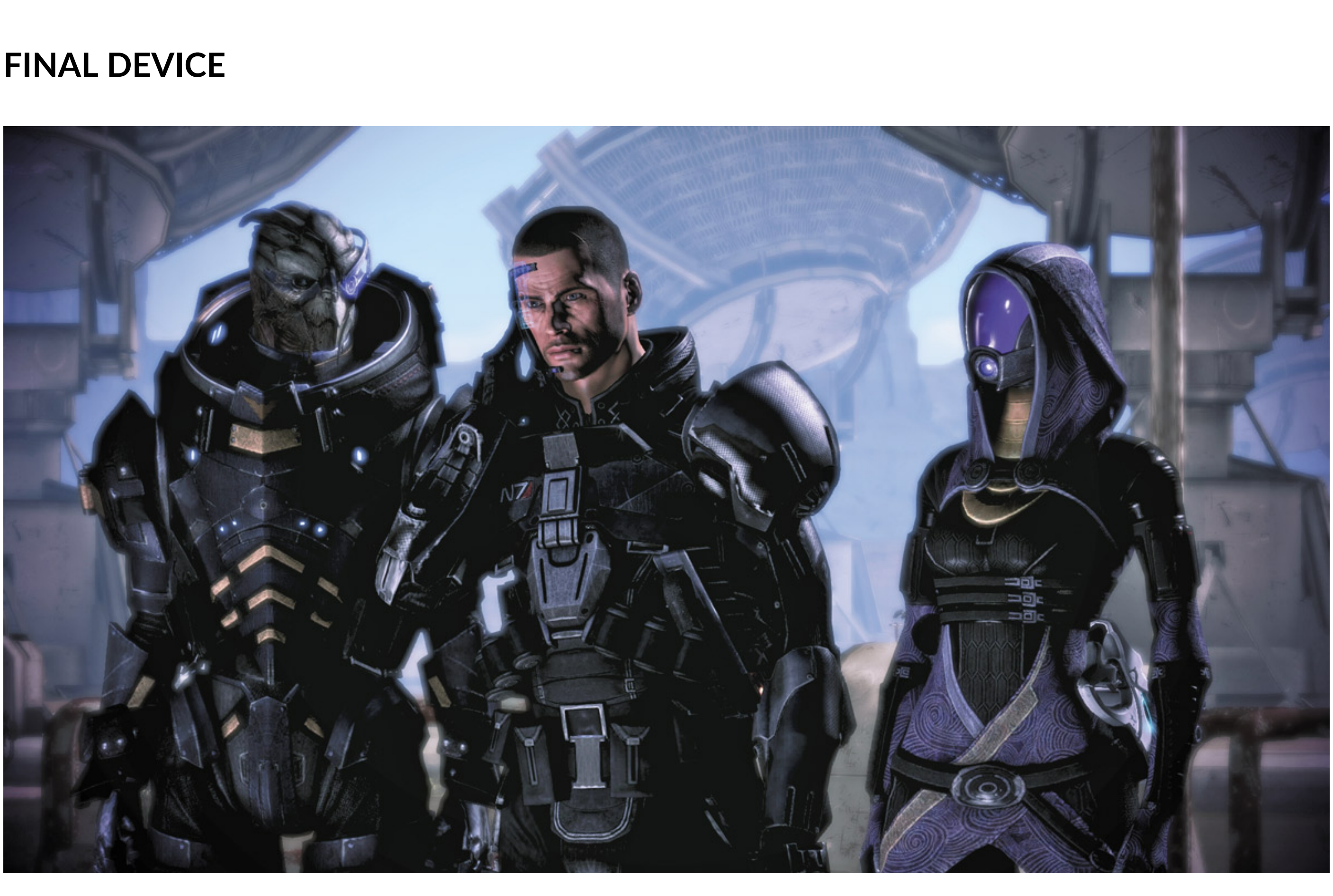


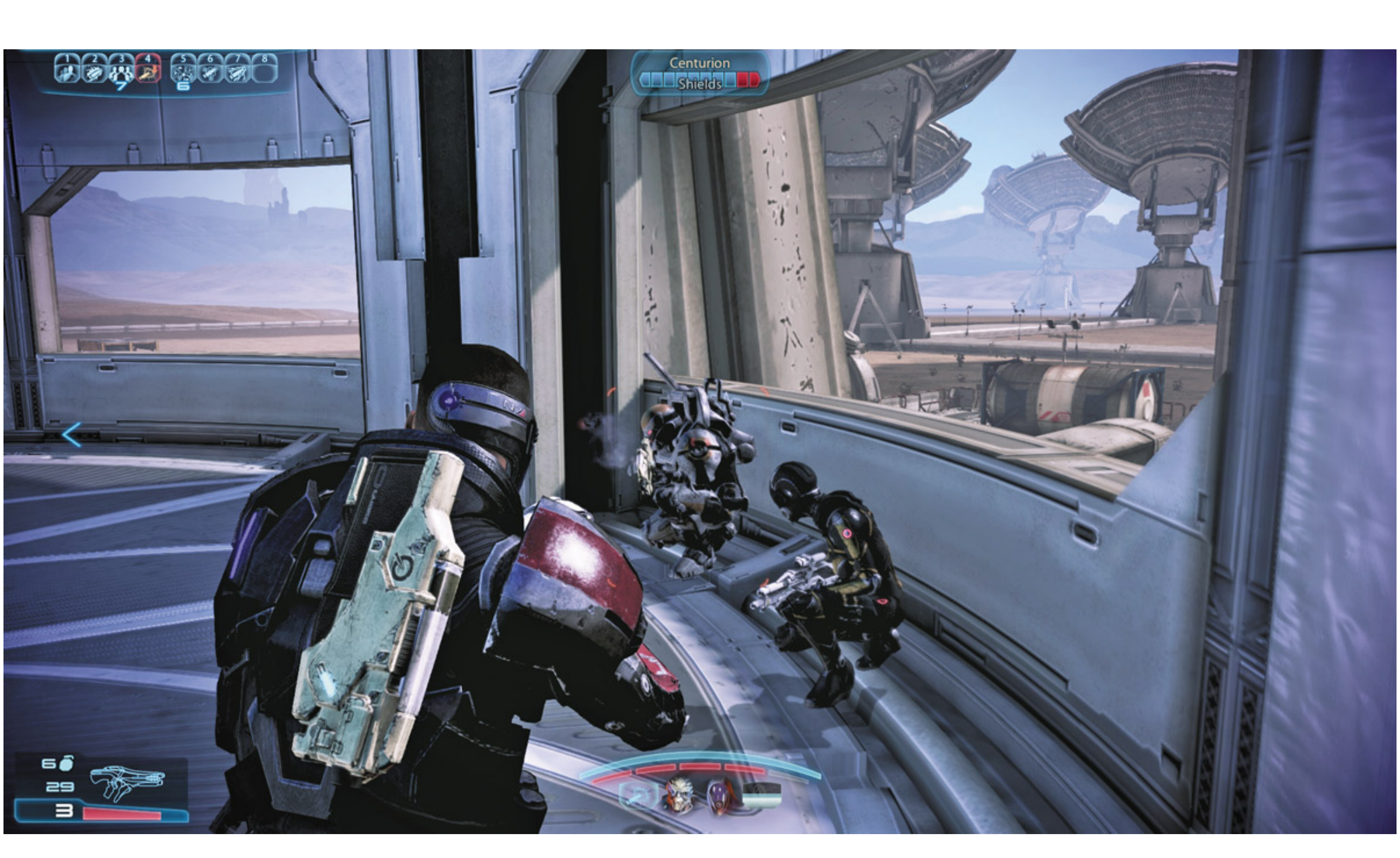
As soon as the first hacking device is disabled, Sato calls in, very worried that she's about to be found out. Despite this, she puts up the location of the second hacking device. At the same time, Cerberus reinforcements swarm into the facility.

Fight your way over to it, clear the area, and disable it. Nemesis snipers are numerous here, so be careful.

It's important to eliminate resistance before attempting each disable, as the enemy has the uncanny ability to interrupt you just before you finish the disable. Better to be safe than sorry.

FINAL DEVICE





Once the second device is history, Shepard calls Sato for the location for the last device but is met with fearful replies that she may be captured or killed if she keeps updating your team. How you respond to her will grant you Paragon or Renegade points.

With the final device marked on your screen, get ready to fight your way over to the central structure. The last device is located inside the building, in the circular central room.

You've got no real protection from attack from all sides, so bring your squad with you to keep the enemy busy while you go for the last device.

Phantoms can make an appearance here, so you definitely want someone watching your back, lest they kill you in a single stroke of their sword. With the last device disabled, your mission is complete.

Side Missions

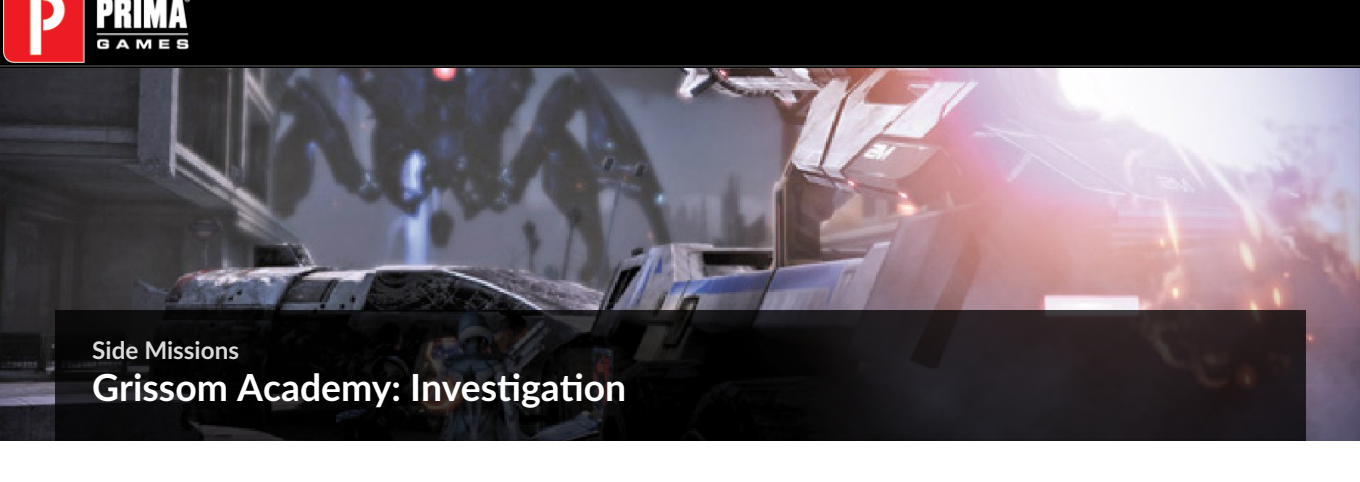
Introduction

There are special missions that become available as the Reaper War grinds toward its climax. They do not advance the plot the way the Priority missions do, but these operations are still important to the war effort.

War Assets are often secured or improved through these missions, and side plots, sometimes involving characters returning from previous games in the series, help flesh out the story.

The catch here is that these missions are very time sensitive. Once you receive the assignments, you have limited time in-game to complete them.

If you deploy on too many missions, these side jobs will no longer be available, costing you valuable resources.



Side Missions

Grissom Academy: Investigation

Grissom Academy is a special school for the best and the brightest of the Systems Alliance, specifically in the area of Biotics development.

Specialist Traynor picks up a distress call from the academy, as it lays directly in the path of the Reaper onslaught.

A turian cruiser apparently has responded to the call, but Traynor reveals that this is not the case. As you will find out, Cerberus is laying siege to the school.

Joker is forced to run a distraction with the Normandy while your team slips aboard to rescue the students.

MISSION BRIEFING

Availability: After "Priority: Palaven"

Battlegrounds: Large classrooms and wide hallways give both your squad and Cerberus many choices for each encounter.

Even though there is a distinct path to follow, be aware of the various side routes and dead ends that you can explore.

There are three specific encounters throughout this mission that will test your ability to deal with and coordinate assaults from multiple approaches.

If you're doing this mission as soon as you receive it, this will be your first encounter with the Cerberus Atlas mech.

These monsters are slow but tough to kill, and they bring extremely heavy firepower to each battle. Supported by other troops, an Atlas can prove to be a big headache.

Fortunately, each encounter with an Atlas occurs in areas with plenty of cover, giving you a chance to flank the machine and take it down in relative safety.

Don't miss any of the weapons located throughout this mission! The M-96 Mattock in particular is arguably one of the best assault rifles in the game.

Consequence Overview: You have the chance to speak to the students of the academy throughout the mission and give them orders that will determine their effectiveness in battle and their safety.

Be aware that your words can send these kids into the meat grinder, or you can give them safer roles to play out for the war effort.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

Returning players from *Mass Effect 2* will be surprised to see Jack at the academy if she survived the final battle, helping defend the students.

While she doesn't return to the squad as a full-time member, Shepard can catch up with her again at Purgatory once this mission is complete.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Assault Rifle Precision Scope	M-96 Mattock Assault Rifle
Assault Rifle Stability Damper	Med Kit (x2)
Biotic Amp Schematics	Mnemonic Visor
Credits: 1,250 (x2); 1,875;	Serrice Council Chestplate
3,750; 4,375	SMG Heat Sink
M-22 Eviscerator Shotgun	SMG Magazine Upgrade

INITIAL CONTACT

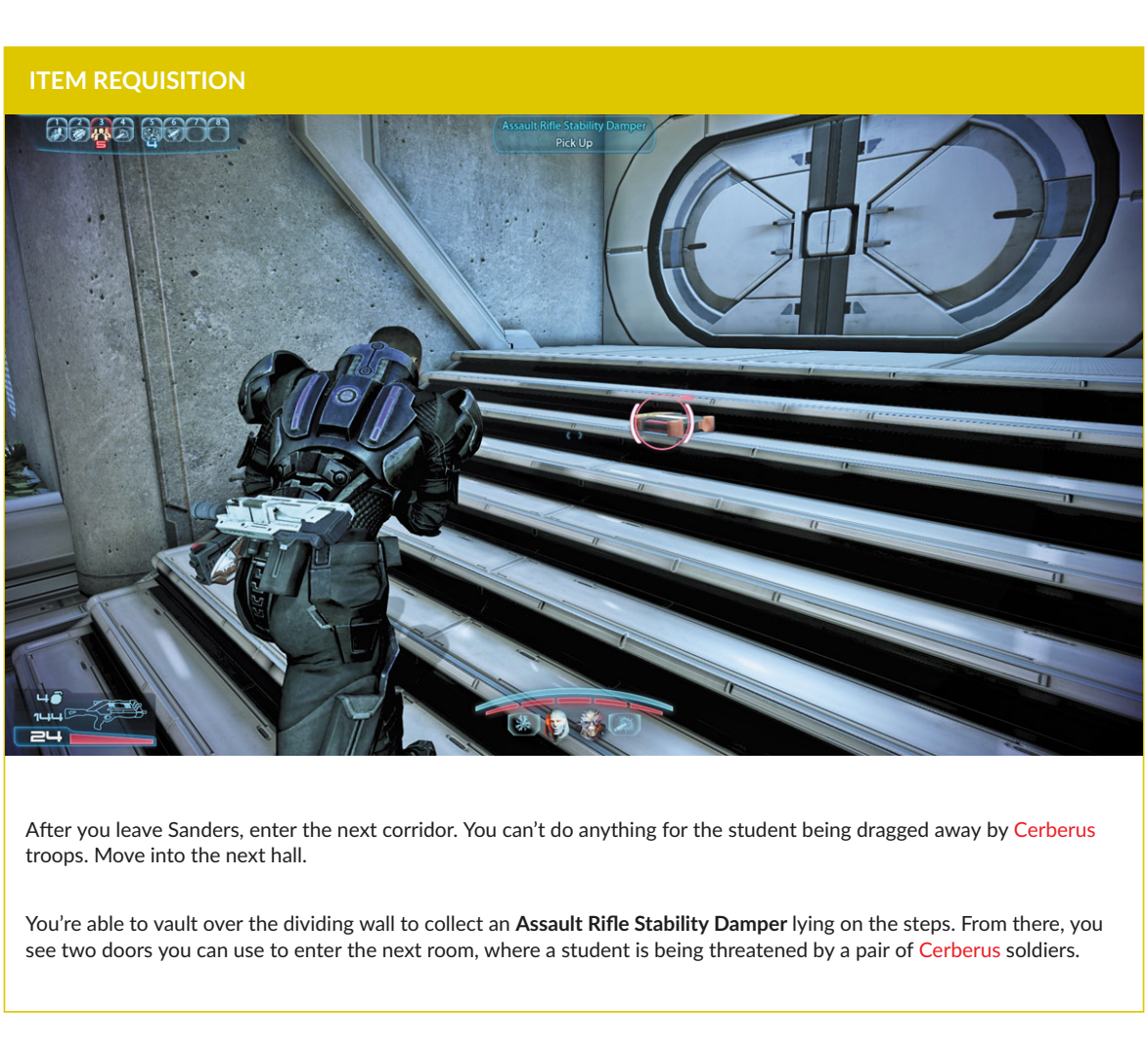
As soon as you arrive, Kahlee Sanders, an officer of the academy and the one who sent out the distress call, is about to be overrun by Cerberus troops.

After eliminating the threat, you have a chance to speak with her regarding the situation at Grissom. Your responses can earn you Paragon or Renegade points.

She mentions knowing Admiral Anderson, and if you inquire about that, she will give you a message to pass on to him.

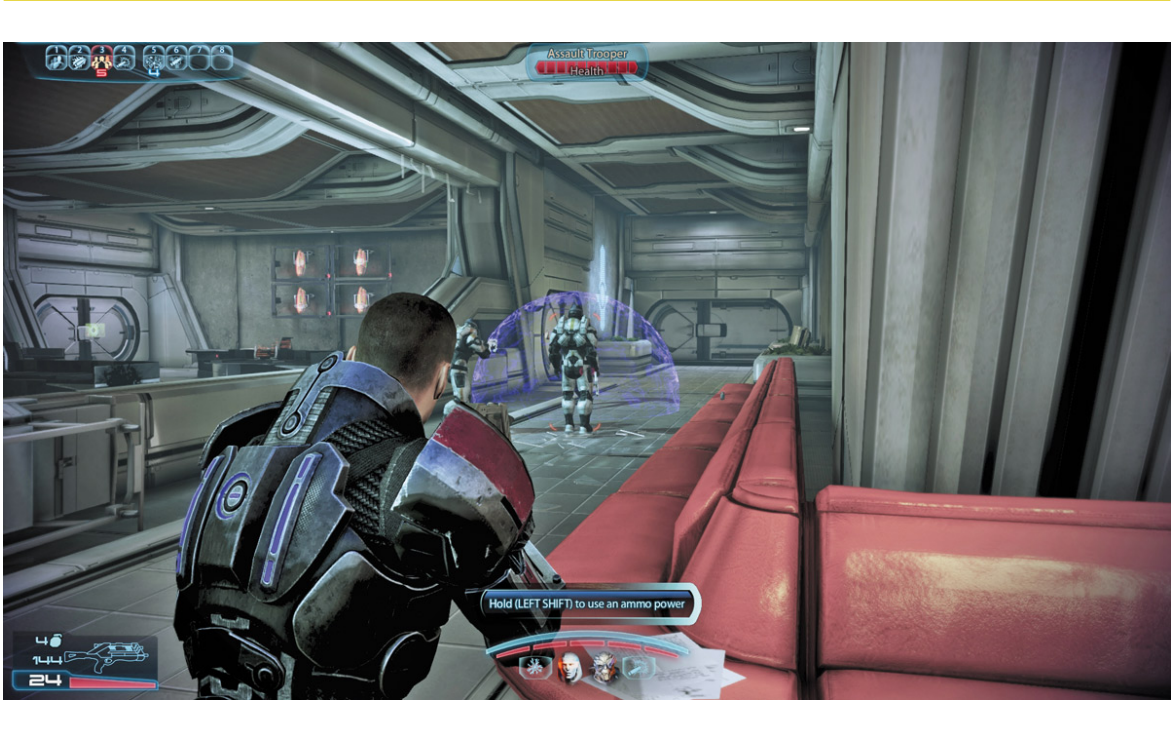
Leave Sanders to her work, and follow her directions to reach the students pinned down by Cerberus in Orion Hall.

ITEM REQUISITION



After you leave Sanders, enter the next corridor. You can't do anything for the student being dragged away by Cerberus troops. Move into the next hall.

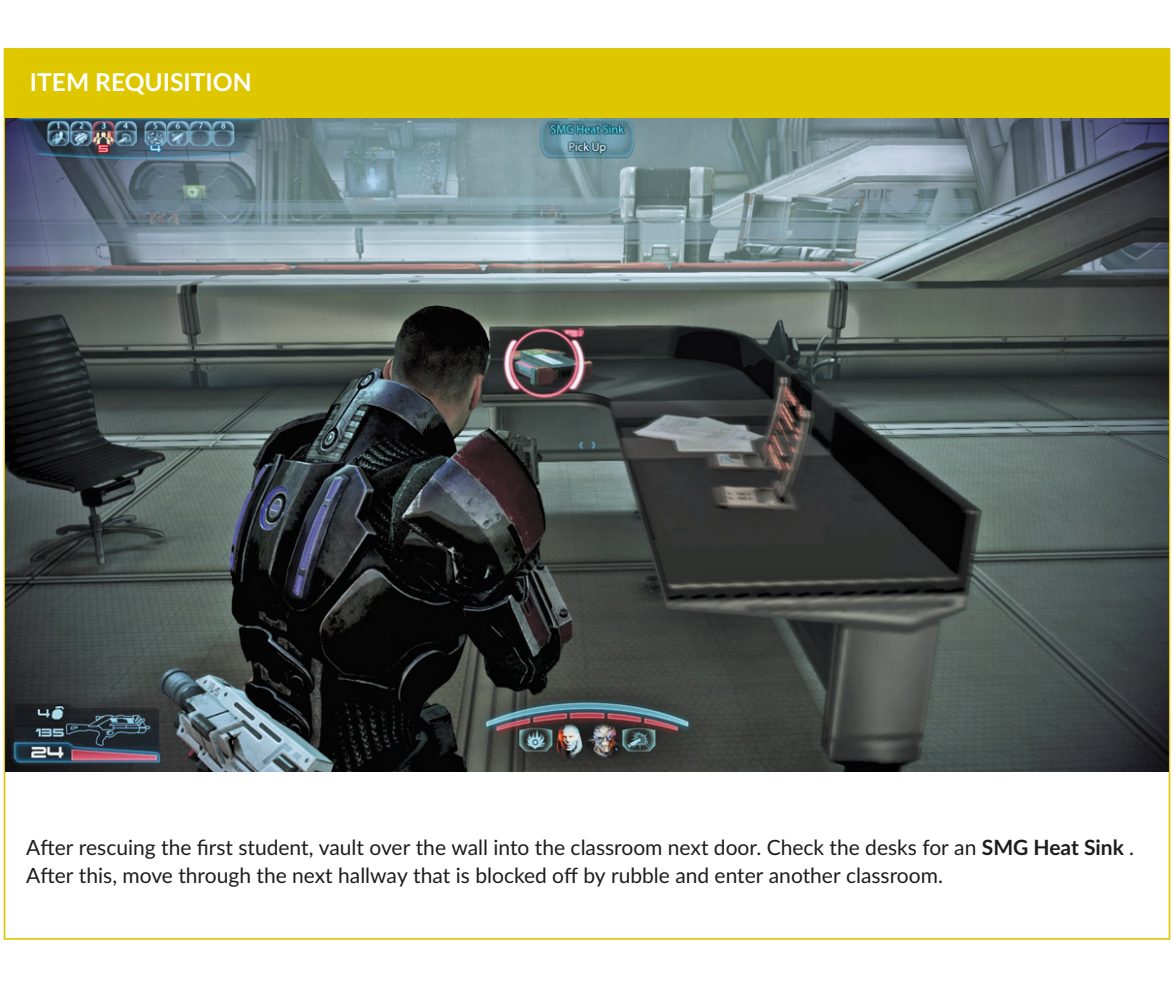
You're able to vault over the dividing wall to collect an **Assault Rifle Stability Damper** lying on the steps. From there, you see two doors you can use to enter the next room, where a student is being threatened by a pair of Cerberus soldiers.



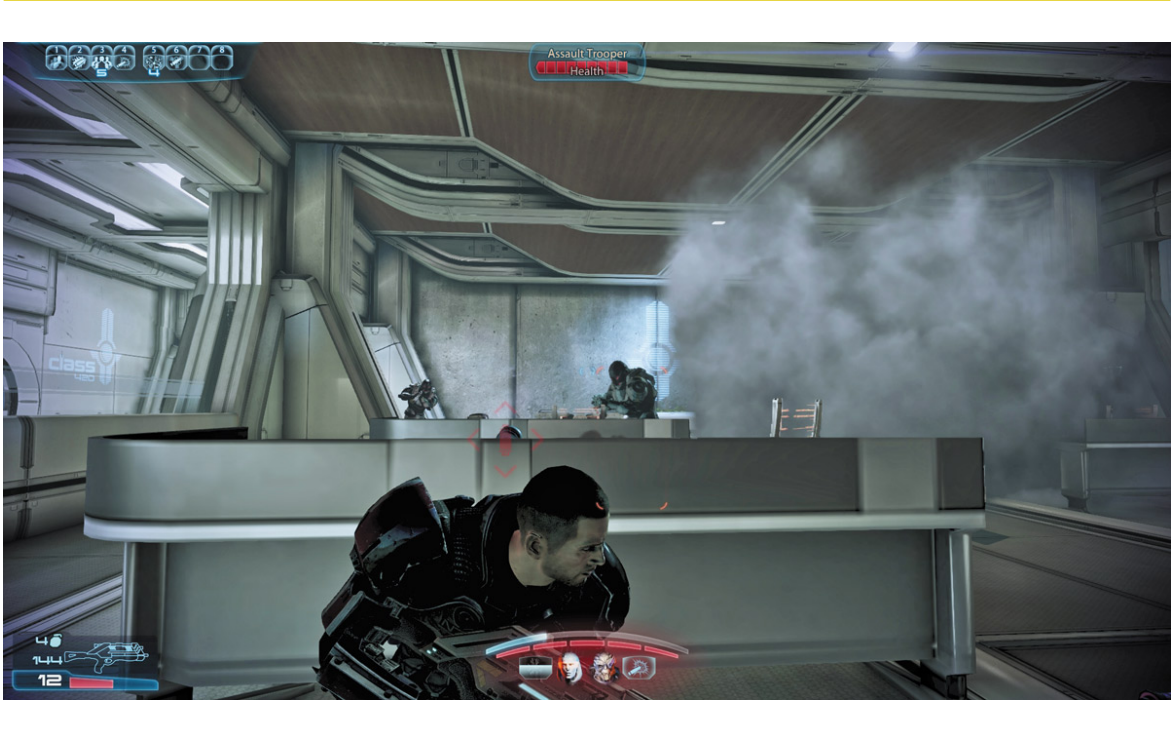
Eliminate them and speak with the student. His sister is missing somewhere in the academy, and you need to find her.

As you enter the room, check the corridor on the room's far right to find a datapad worth 1,250 credits.

ITEM REQUISITION

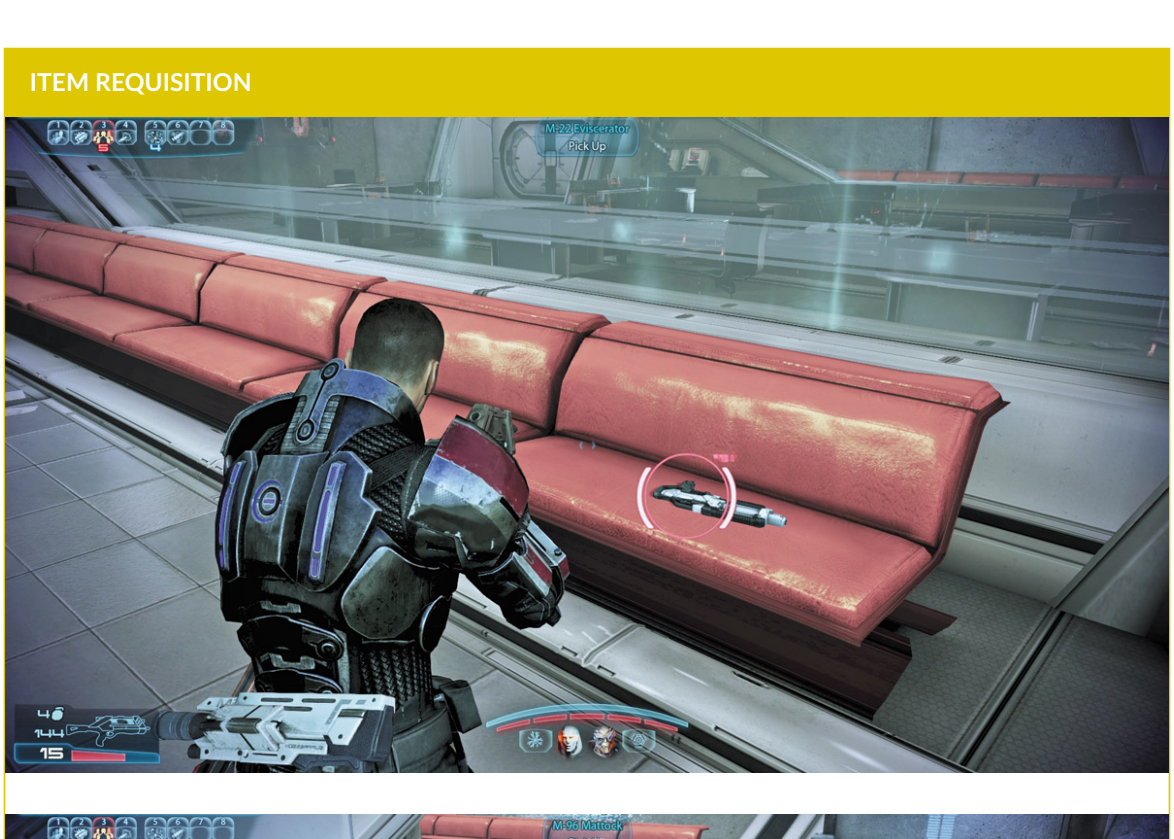


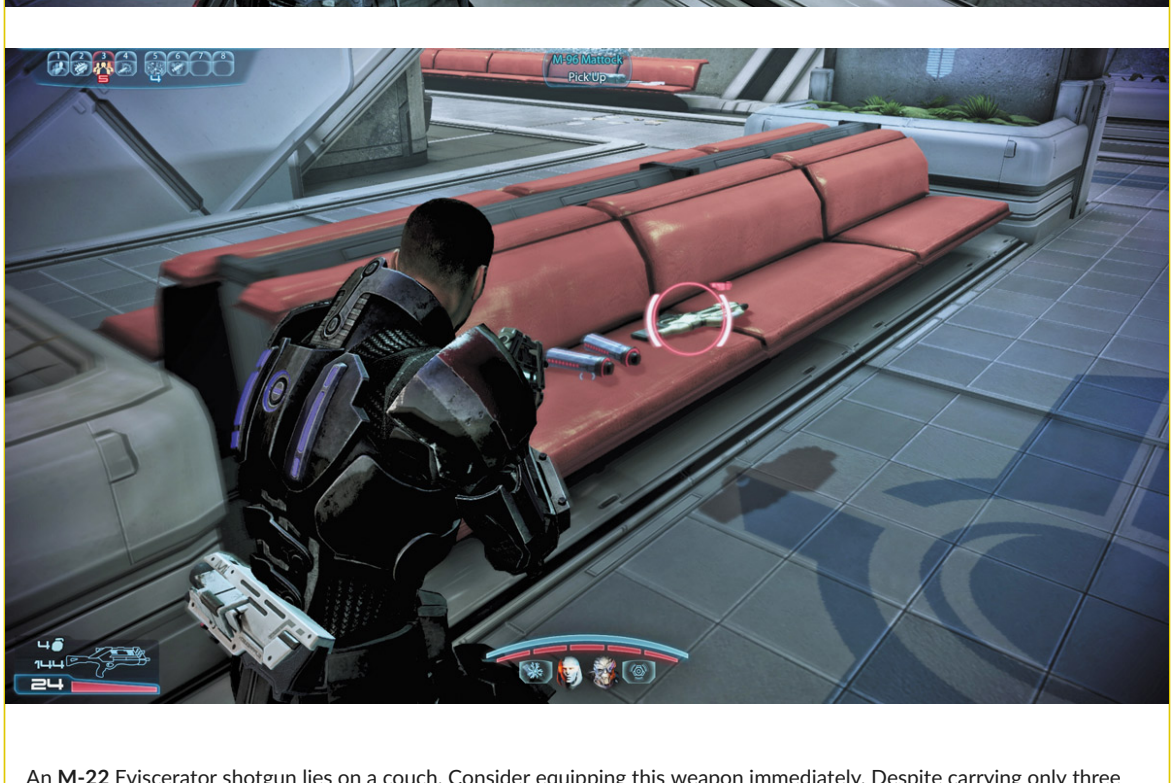
After rescuing the first student, vault over the wall into the classroom next door. Check the desks for an **SMG Heat Sink** . After this, move through the next hallway that is blocked off by rubble and enter another classroom.



Cerberus troops gun down another student, then enter the room to check the body. You face a mix of Assault Troopers and Centurions here. Once you're clear, enter the left side door to explore the hall that was blocked off by rubble.

ITEM REQUISITION





An **M-22** Eviscerator shotgun lies on a couch. Consider equipping this weapon immediately. Despite carrying only three shots per thermal clip, it's a powerful weapon to find so early in the game.

In the room through the classroom's right exit, you can find the **M-96** Mattock assault rifle on another couch. Between these two weapons, you effectively cover all ranges of combat.

Close to the rifle is the **Mnemonic Visor** armor piece, as well as the sister of the first student you rescued. Talk to her and she will eventually get to safety.

Look for the locker near this student for another 1,250 credits. Once you've cleared the area of these items, move on to Orion Hall.

STUDENTS IN PERIL

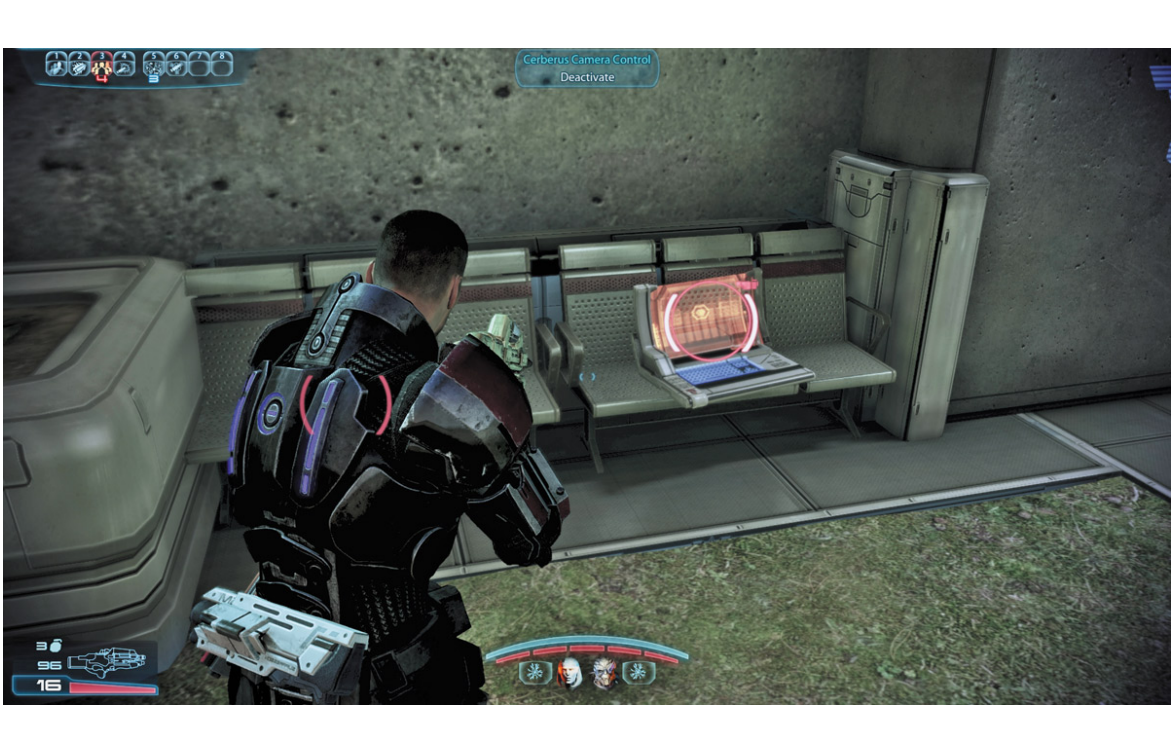
As soon as you enter Orion Hall, you see several students threatened by the enemy. They deal with the initial threat, but a Cerberus Atlas joins the battle.

The ensuing firefight will pit you against it and a mixed force of ground troops. Eliminate the Atlas first, focusing your entire squad on the machine.

Once it's no longer a threat, concentrate on the Cerberus soldiers until the students are out of danger.

Note that a Students' Barrier meter will appear at the top of your HUD. Should it be drained completely by hostile attacks, your mission fails.

Ensign Prangley and Ensign Rodriguez are the two students in charge of the group. A conversation will ensue, allowing you to gain Paragon or Renegade points based on your responses.



While the students take a badly needed break, you need to grant Kahlee Sanders camera access to the whole station, as Cerberus has it locked down.

Look for the Cerberus camera control near the door where the Atlas pushed through. A **Med Kit** is on the room's opposite side if you need the supplies.

Once the camera controls are back with Sanders, go to the room where the students are to find another item and the door overrides. A datapad in the room also contains 1,875 credits.

NOTE

If she survived the suicide mission at the end of *Mass Effect 2* , Jack is leading the student resistance here. You can talk to her to learn more about the students. If she's dead, her leadership role will be filled by Ensign Prangley.

ITEM REQUISITION

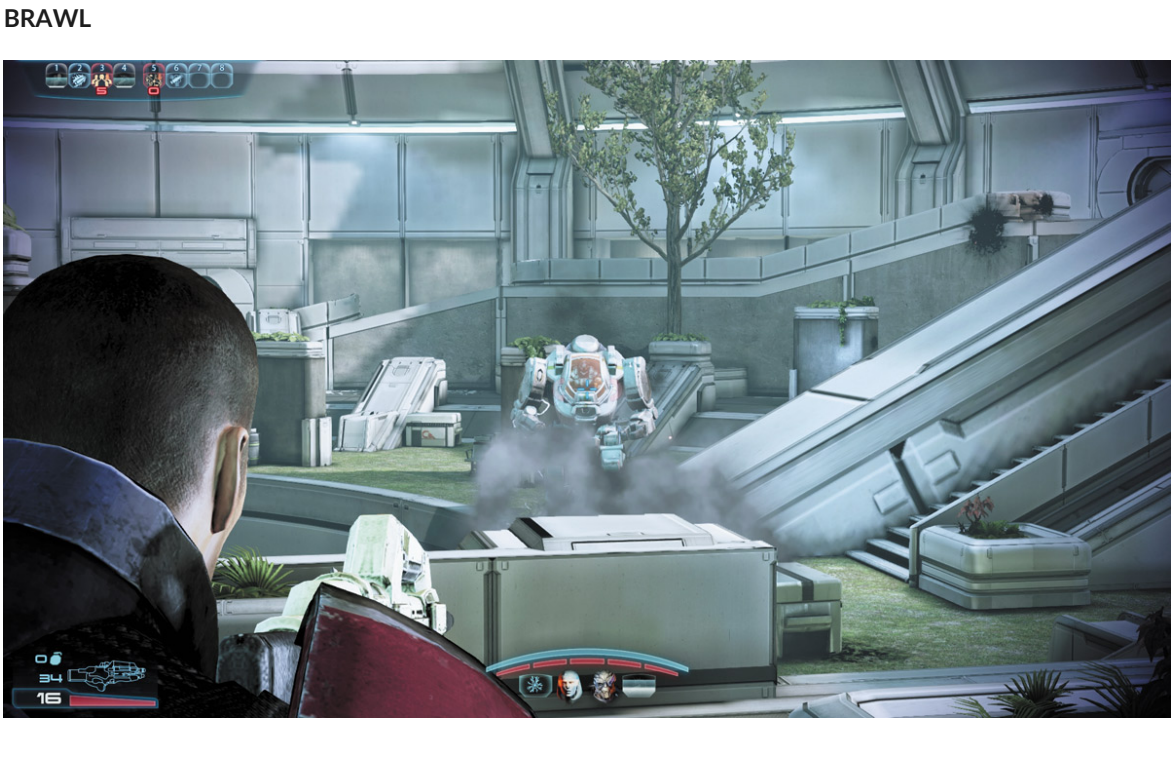
Look for an **Assault Rifle Precision Scope** near the door override.

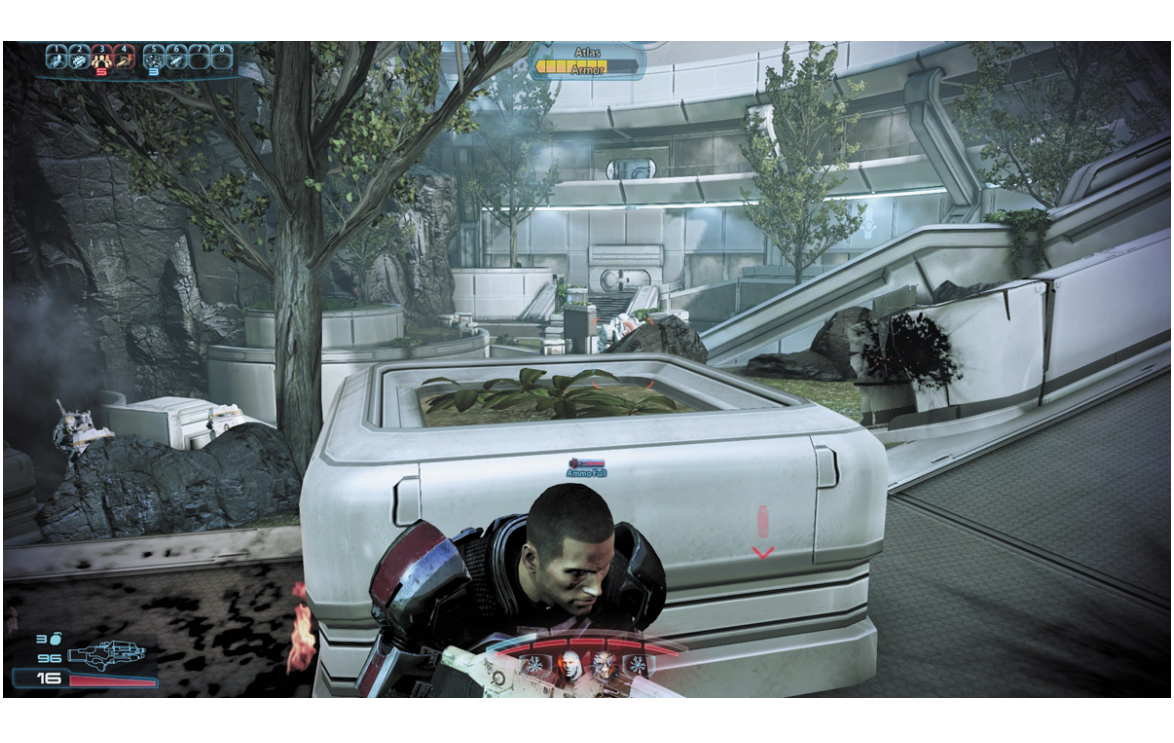
After you activate the override, you can take the corridor below this room to a door and force it open.

You are given another conversation choice: The students can stay in cover and support you only when it's safe, or you can tell them to go all out but risk drawing more fire.

Continue through the corridor until you reach a large atrium and a massive Cerberus force.

BRAWL

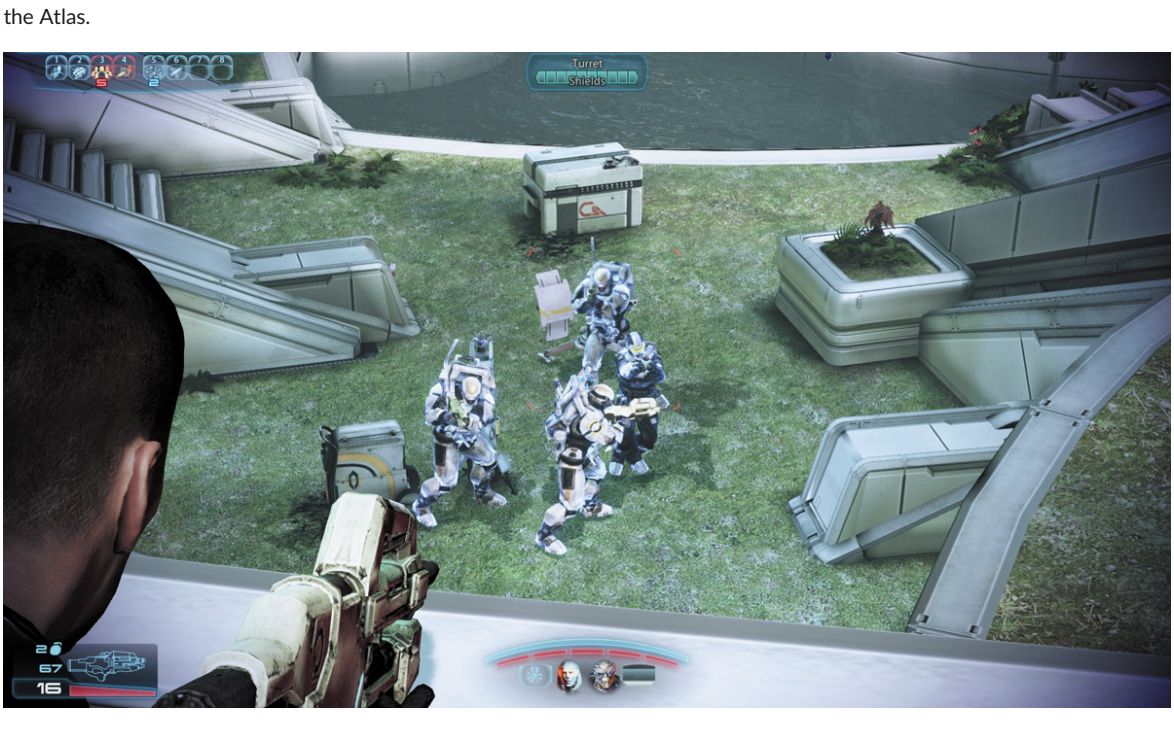


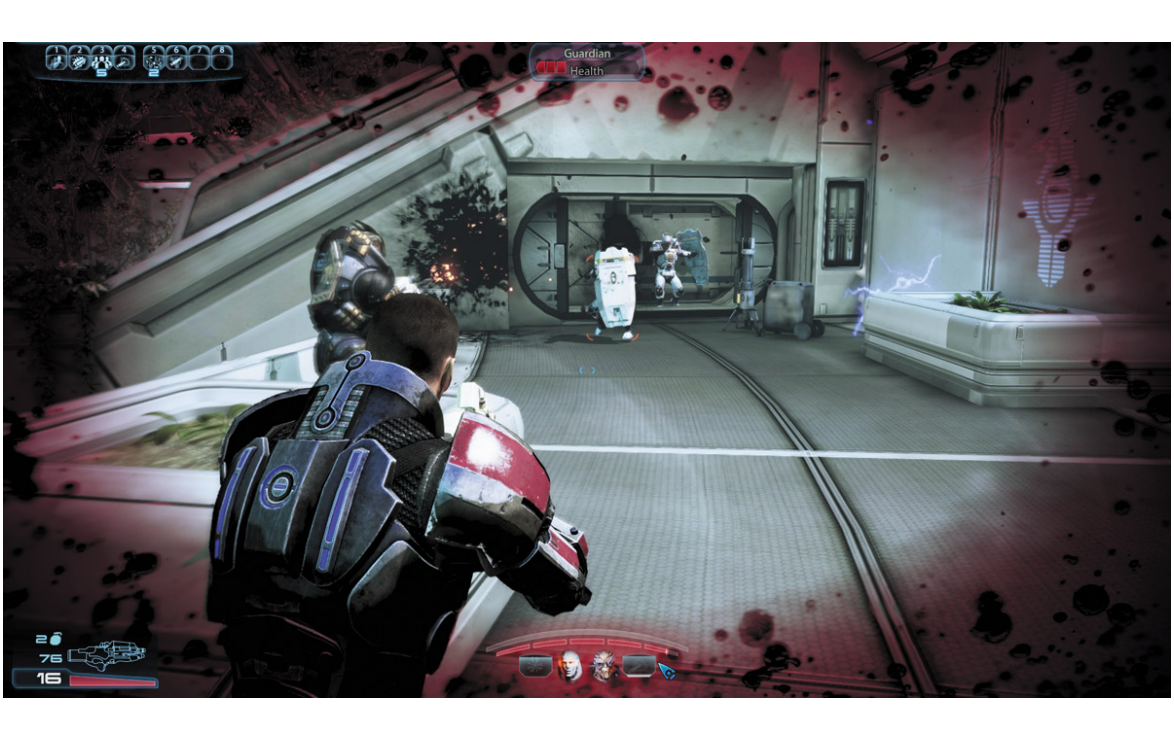


As soon as you enter this room, you will notice an Atlas in the distance, already facing you.

What you may not see are the Centurions, Assault Troopers, and Combat Engineers in the area just ahead of the cover in front of you; they are all supported by a series of shield generators that constantly provide additional protection to the enemy.

It is tempting to rush straight ahead to that cover to make your stand, but the enemy will encircle you and you'll take fire from the Atlas.





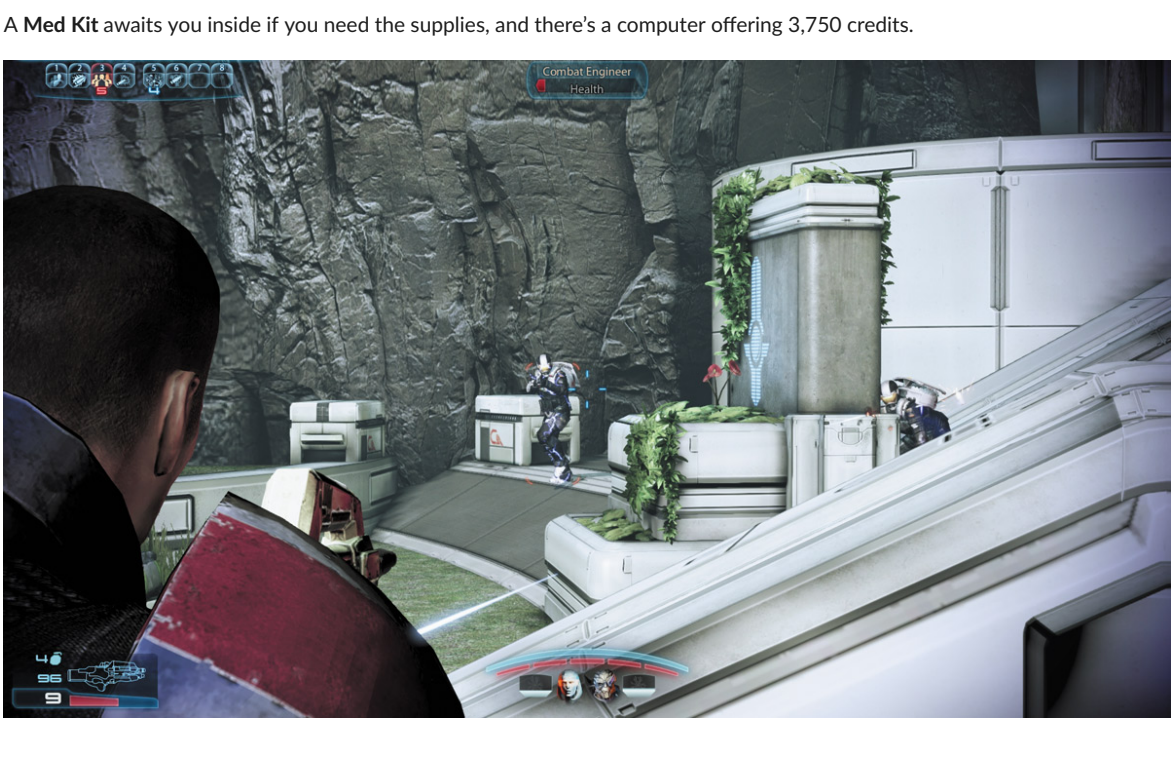
Your best bet is to immediately take the ramp to your right as soon as you enter the atrium. This will block the Atlas from getting a line of sight on you, while giving you the height advantage on the enemy.

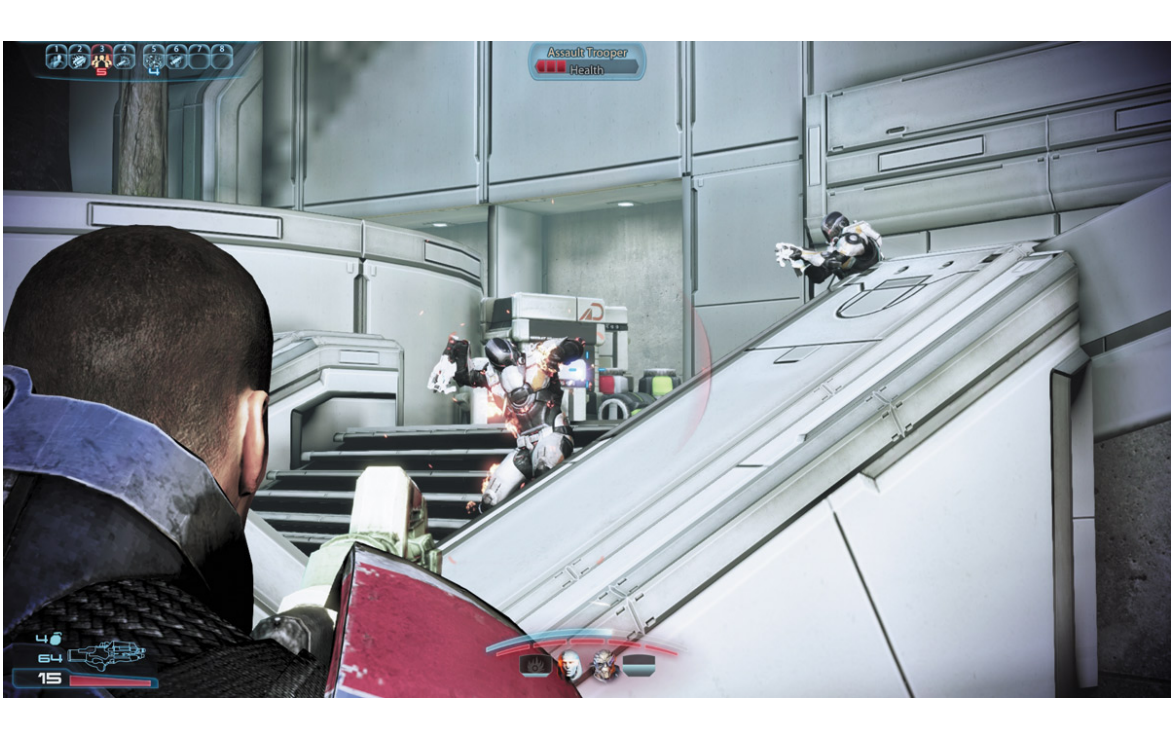
Maintain control of this perch, and watch for Cerberus troops entering from a locked door at the top of the ramp. Fortunately, the students will be supporting you from on high with their Biotics; however, don't count on them to win the battle for you.

After several waves of reinforcements, Cerberus stops sending in grunts, allowing you to destroy the Atlas at your leisure.

Scour the area of ammo if you need it, then proceed through the unlocked door to a small corridor leading to the next half of this battle.

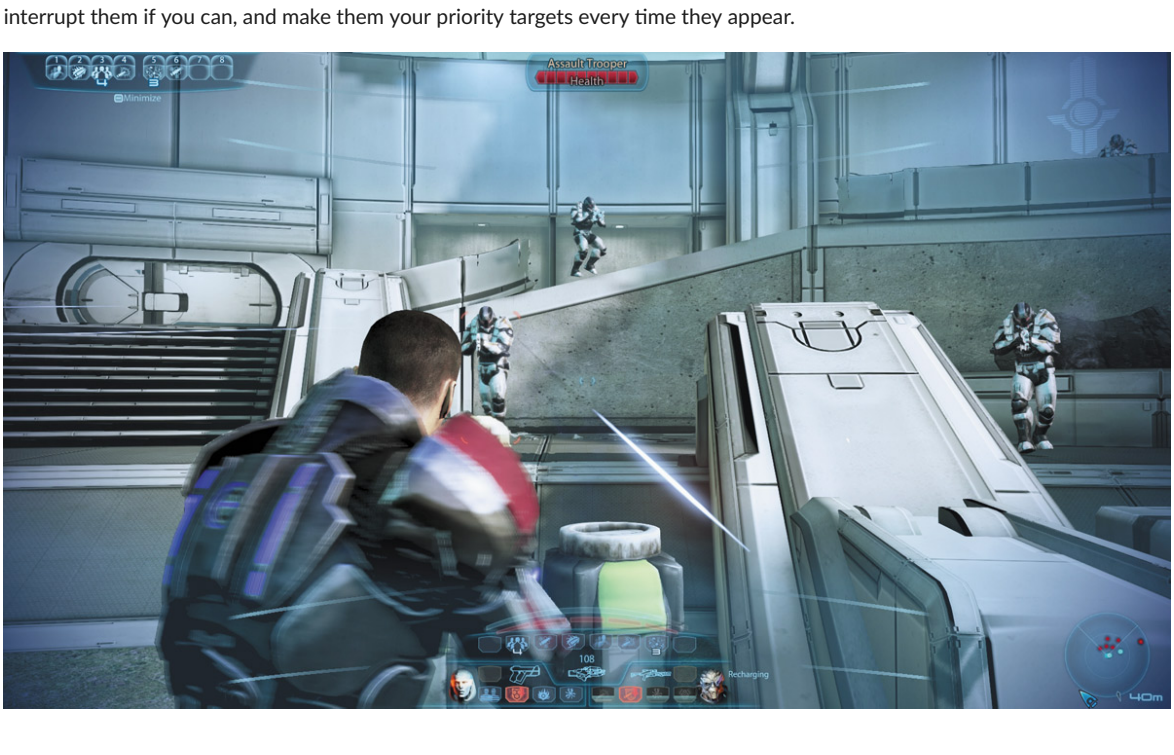
A **Med Kit** awaits you inside if you need the supplies, and there's a computer offering 3,750 credits.





The next phase starts off with you at a distinct positional disadvantage. This other half of the atrium is similar to the first, but now you start off on the lower levels, and Cerberus controls the ramp to higher ground.

Combat Engineers also drop into the lower level as you enter and may already have sentry turrets up and running. Try to interrupt them if you can, and make them your priority targets every time they appear.



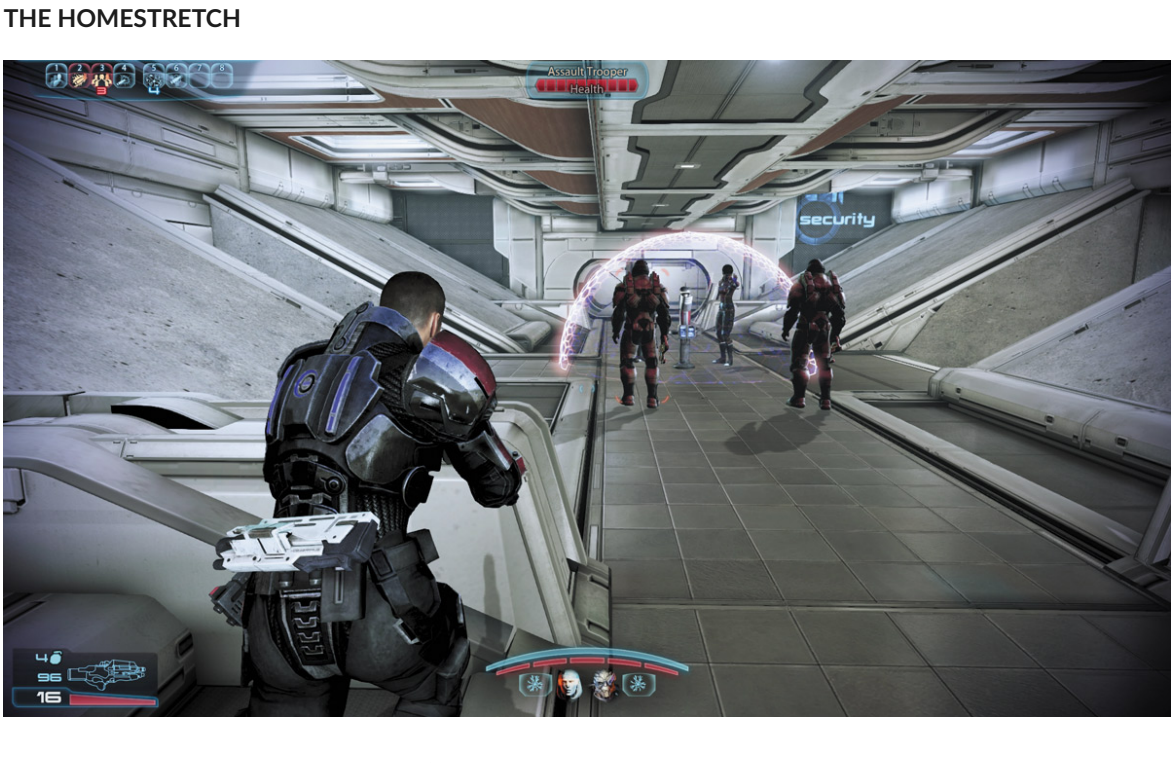
It might seem like a good idea to try holding the ramps during this phase, but this can actually be very risky, as Cerberus reinforcements drop in across the ramps and throughout the lower level.

This can leave your back exposed to attacks, and you may miss Engineers setting up turrets.

In the grassy area, find cover that faces the ramps for you and your squad, and engage the enemy as they drop in.Meanwhile, the students will continue throwing Biotic blasts to support you.

After many tense waves of reinforcements, Cerberus falls back, and the atrium is yours.

THE HOMESTRETCH



Leave the atrium via another corridor, and you'll enter a larger passage. To your left, Cerberus troops are attempting to break through a barrier erected by students.

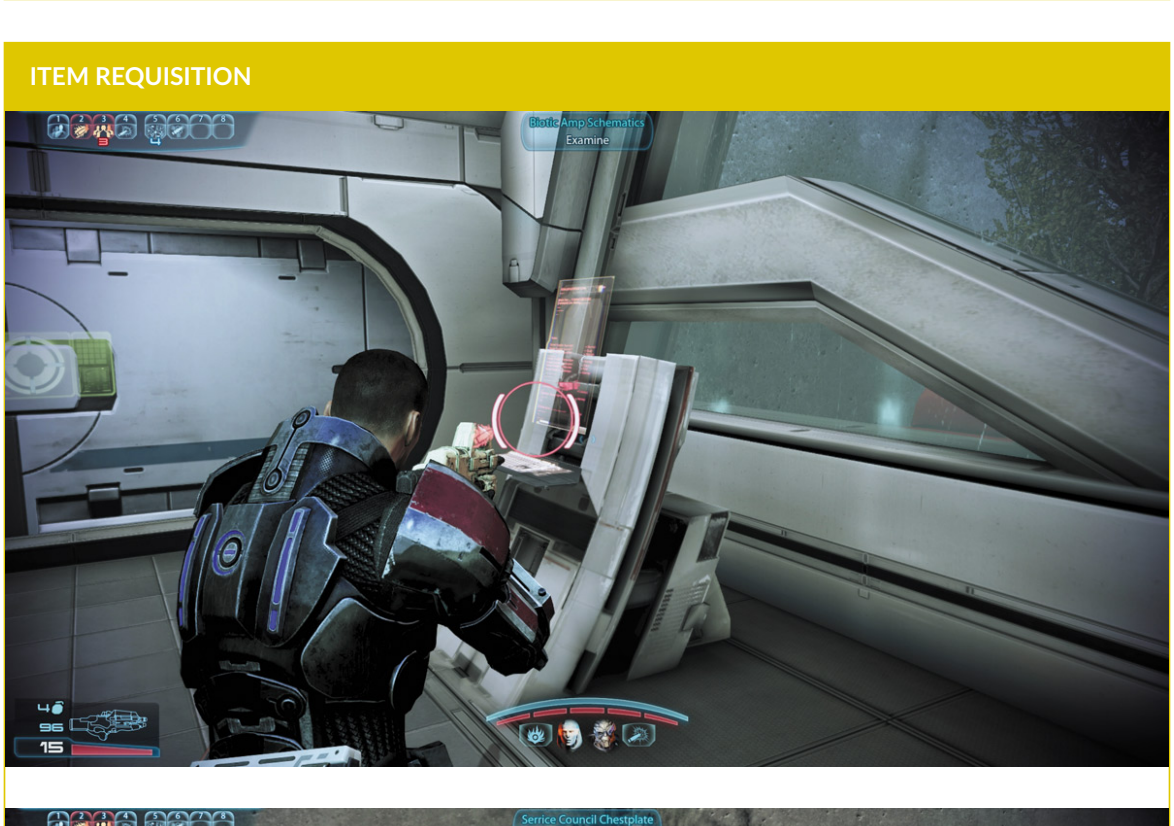
To the right is a computer that grants you 4,375 credits.Snag those before rushing the inattentive Cerberus guards and put them out of their misery.

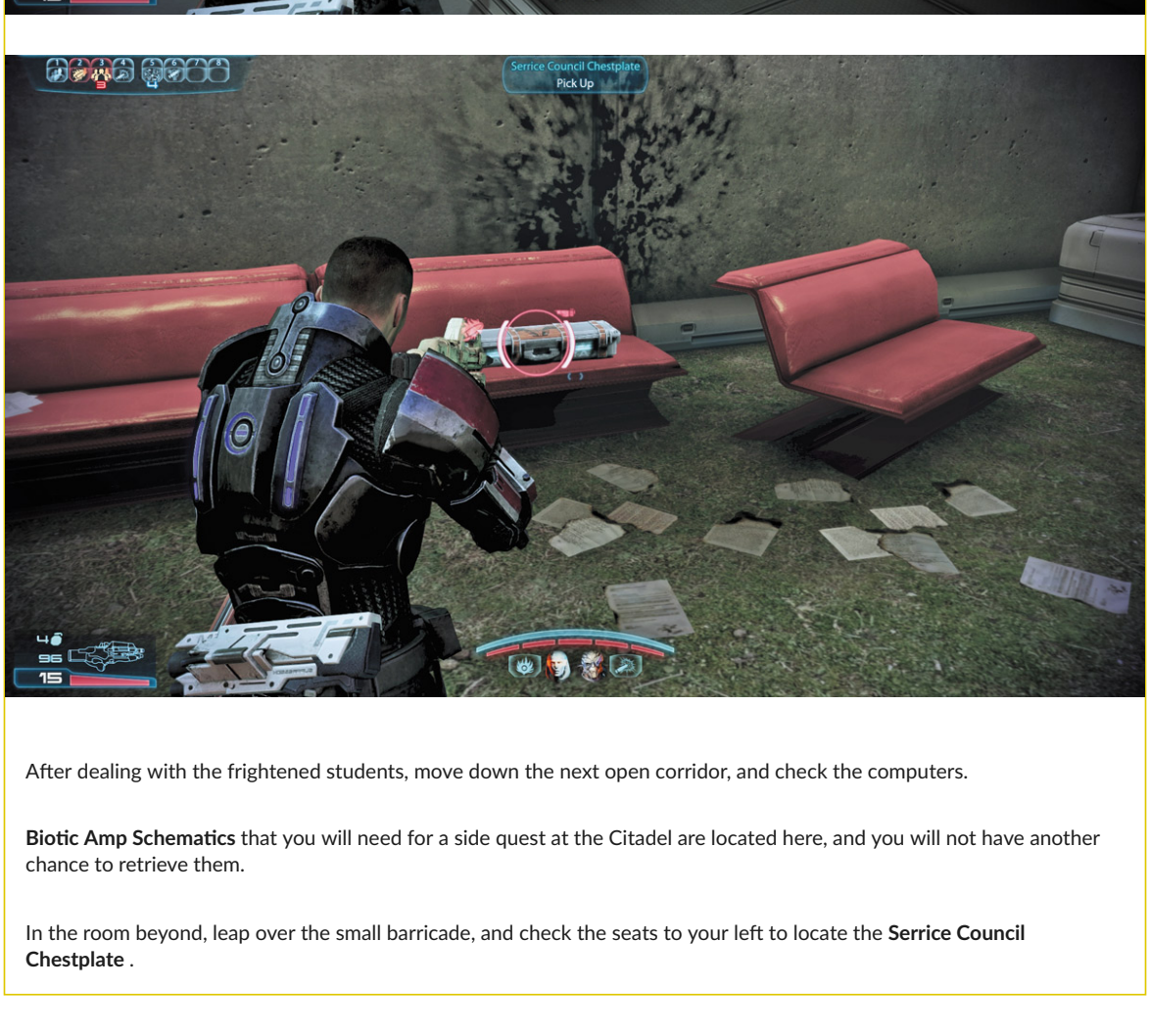
The students are less than trusting of you, claiming that the Cerberus troops had tried to deceive them with false hopes of rescue, and they are not going to be fooled now. You're given Paragon and Renegade options for how to deal with them.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

If players saved David Archer in the *Mass Effect 2* "Project Overlord" DLC, he will be present here to unlock a room with another three items.

ITEM REQUISITION

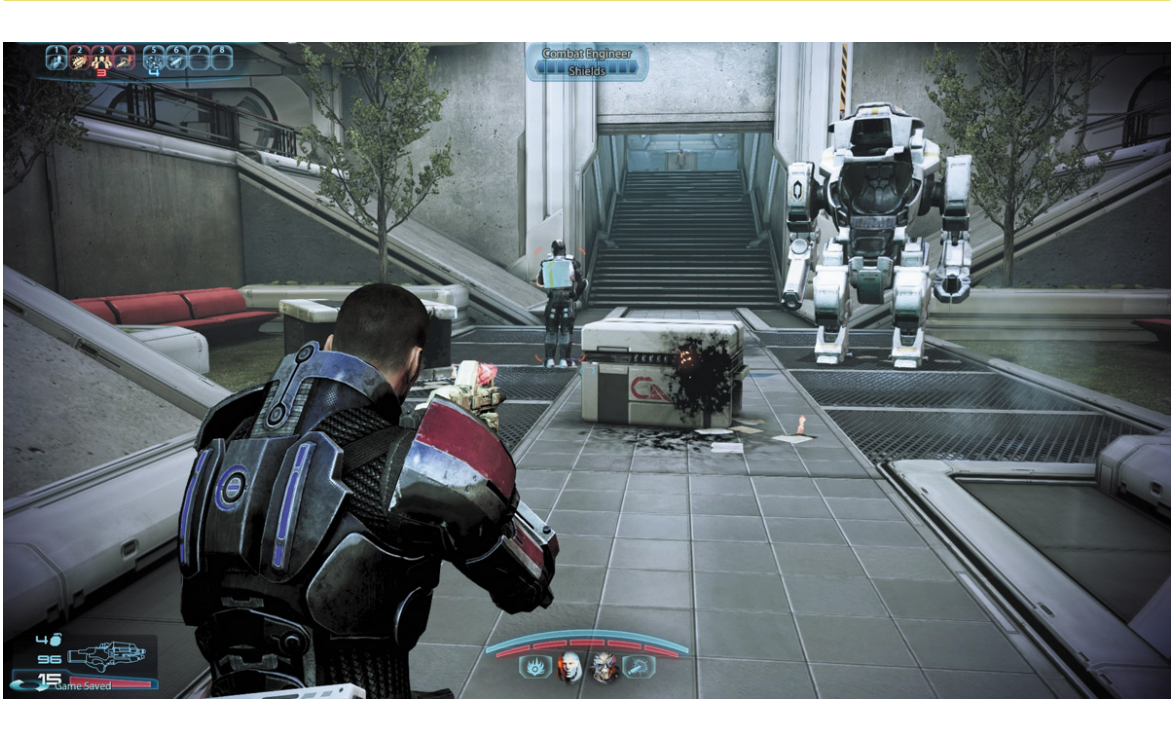




After dealing with the frightened students, move down the next open corridor, and check the computers.

Biotic Amp Schematics that you will need for a side quest at the Citadel are located here, and you will not have another chance to retrieve them.

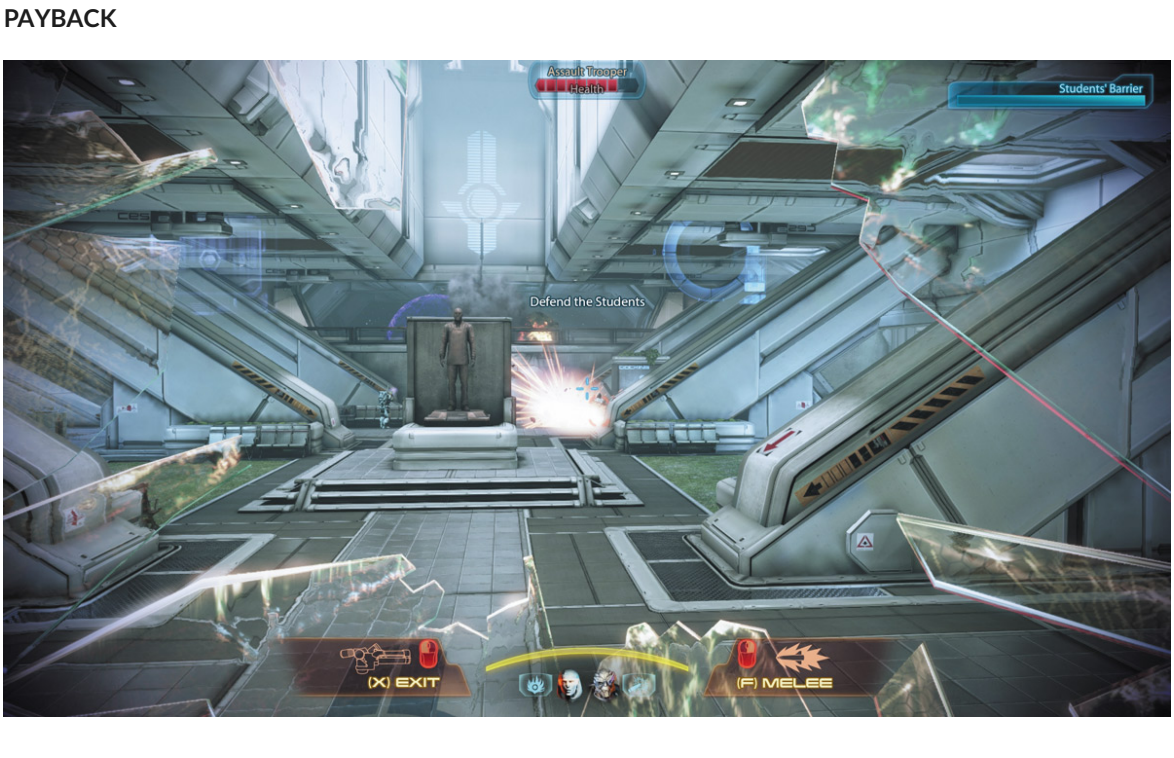
In the room beyond, leap over the small barricade, and check the seats to your left to locate the **Serrice Council Chestplate** .

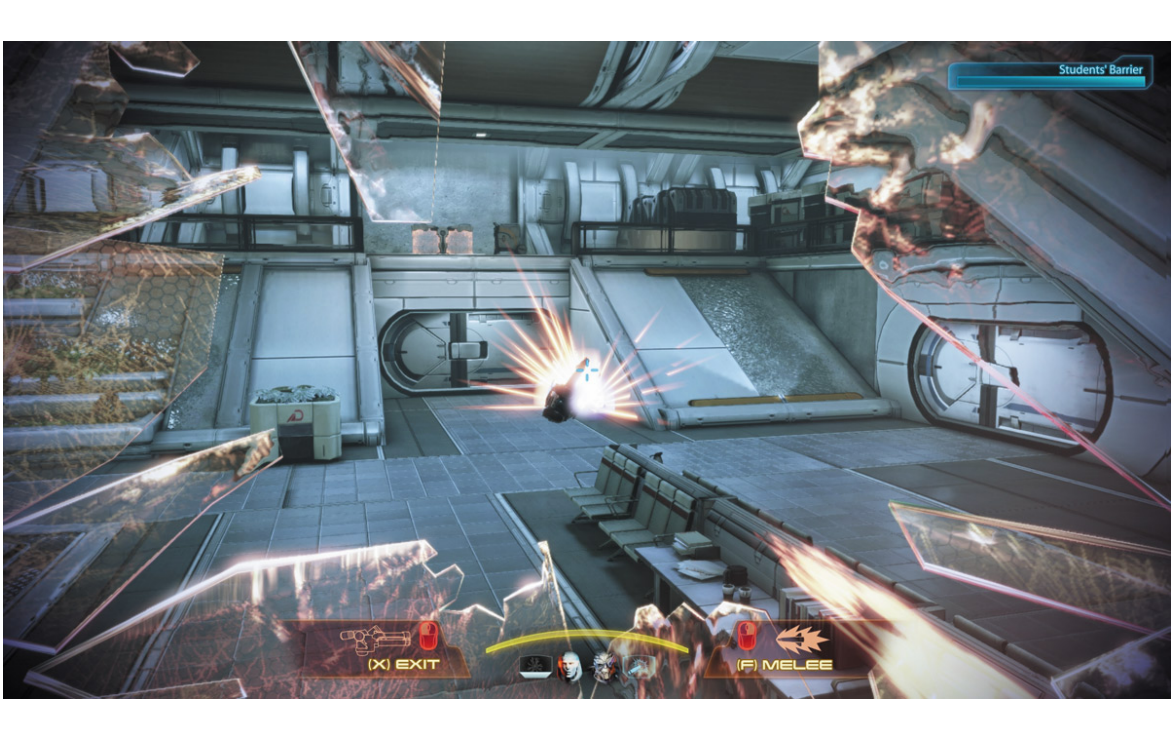


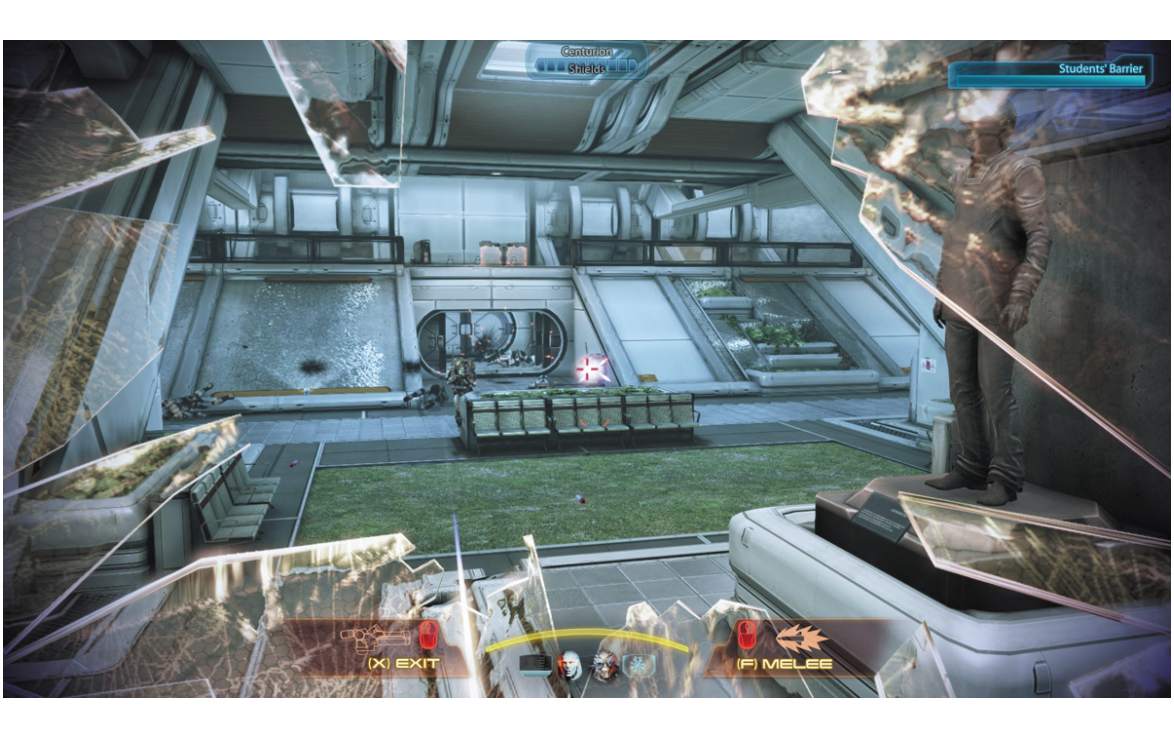
Past the room with the chestplate, you find a Combat Engineer with his back turned to you and an empty Atlas mech next to him.

Kill him before he gets the chance to jump in, and take the mech for yourself. Stomp up the stairs into the next room for the final battle at Grissom Academy.

PAYBACK

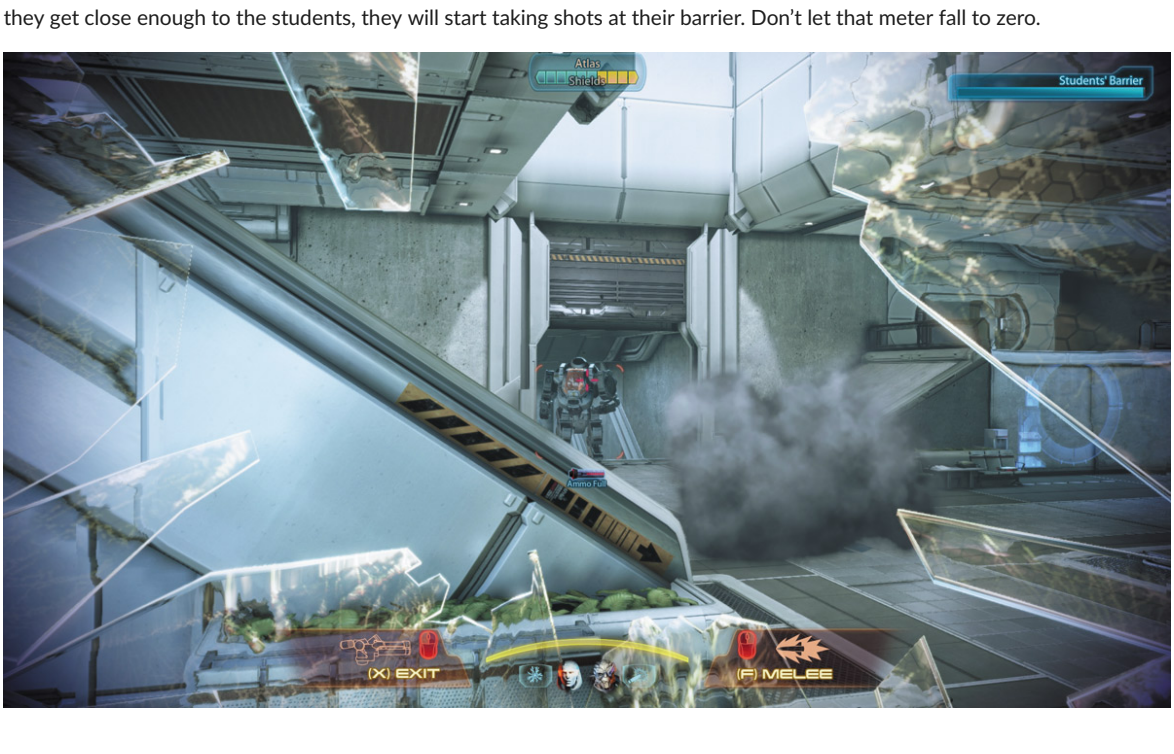






The Atlas mech is well armored and well armed. Your melee attack will flatten any soldier who gets close, your missiles have powerful area-of-effect blasts, and the main gun is accurate and can send the enemy flying across the room.

You will likely rely mostly on the gun, as it can be used while on the move. Slaughter the enemy troops as quickly as possible; if they get close enough to the students, they will start taking shots at their barrier. Don't let that meter fall to zero.

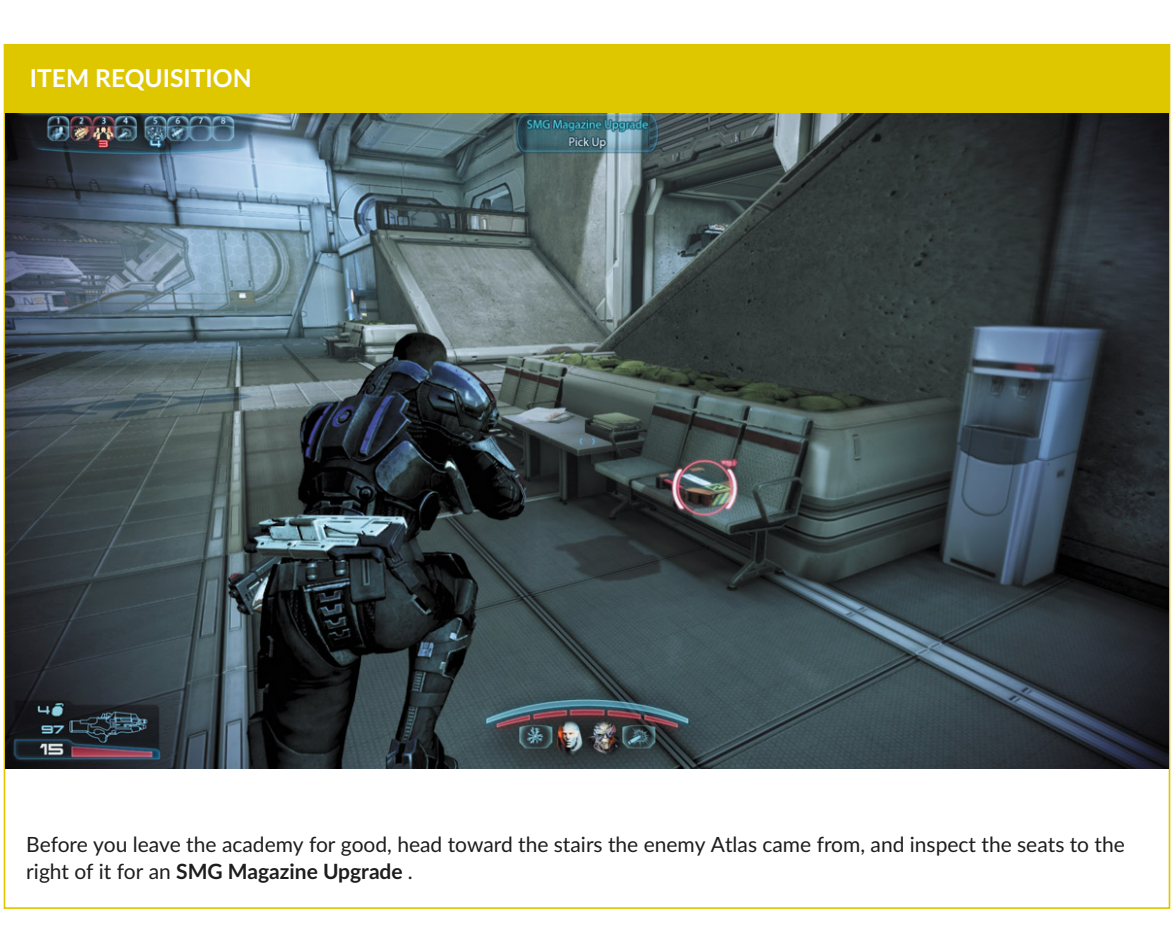


Eventually, Cerberus will send their own Atlas up the stairs you entered from to confront you.

If you have retained your own mech up to this point, you can kill the hostile quickly by focusing rapid cannon shots directly onto its canopy.

With the Atlas defeated, the students make a break for the shuttles and freedom, and you should join them.

ITEM REQUISITION



Before you leave the academy for good, head toward the stairs the enemy Atlas came from, and inspect the seats to the right of it for an **SMG Magazine Upgrade** .

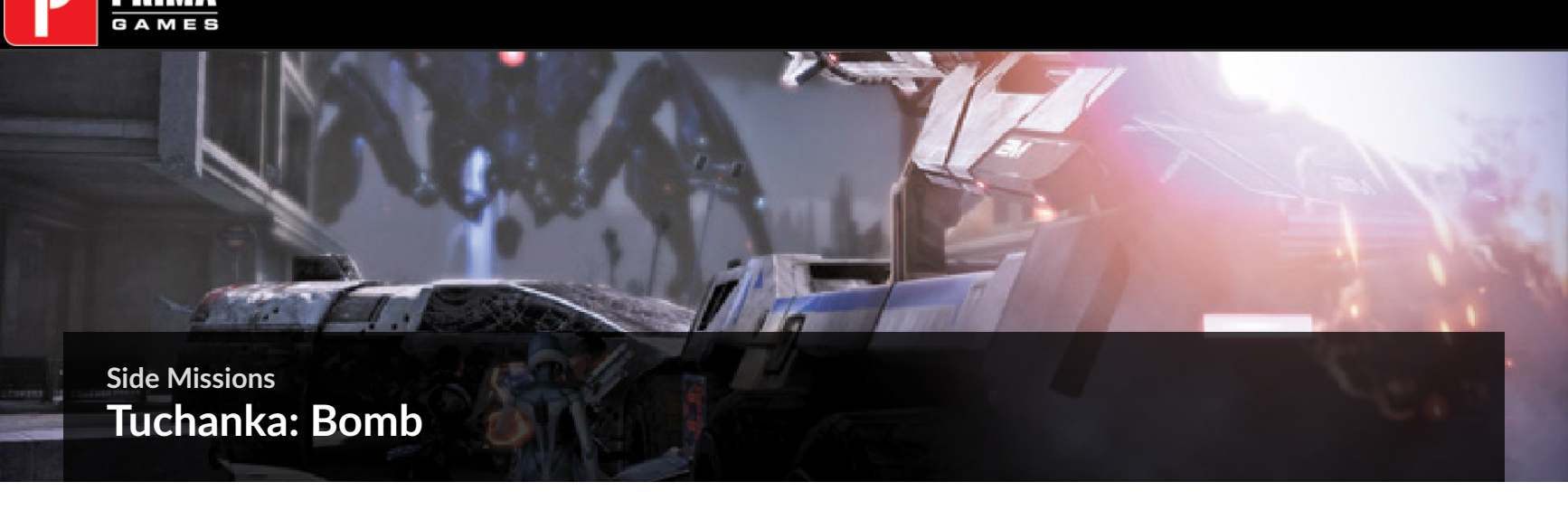
As you flee the academy, Cerberus gives chase, resulting in the death of Ensign Prangley.

As the shuttles fly back to the Normandy, you're given another set of conversation options that will determine where the students will end up after Grissom Academy.

You can send them to the front lines for Renegade points, or you can find them a safer defensive role for Paragon points.

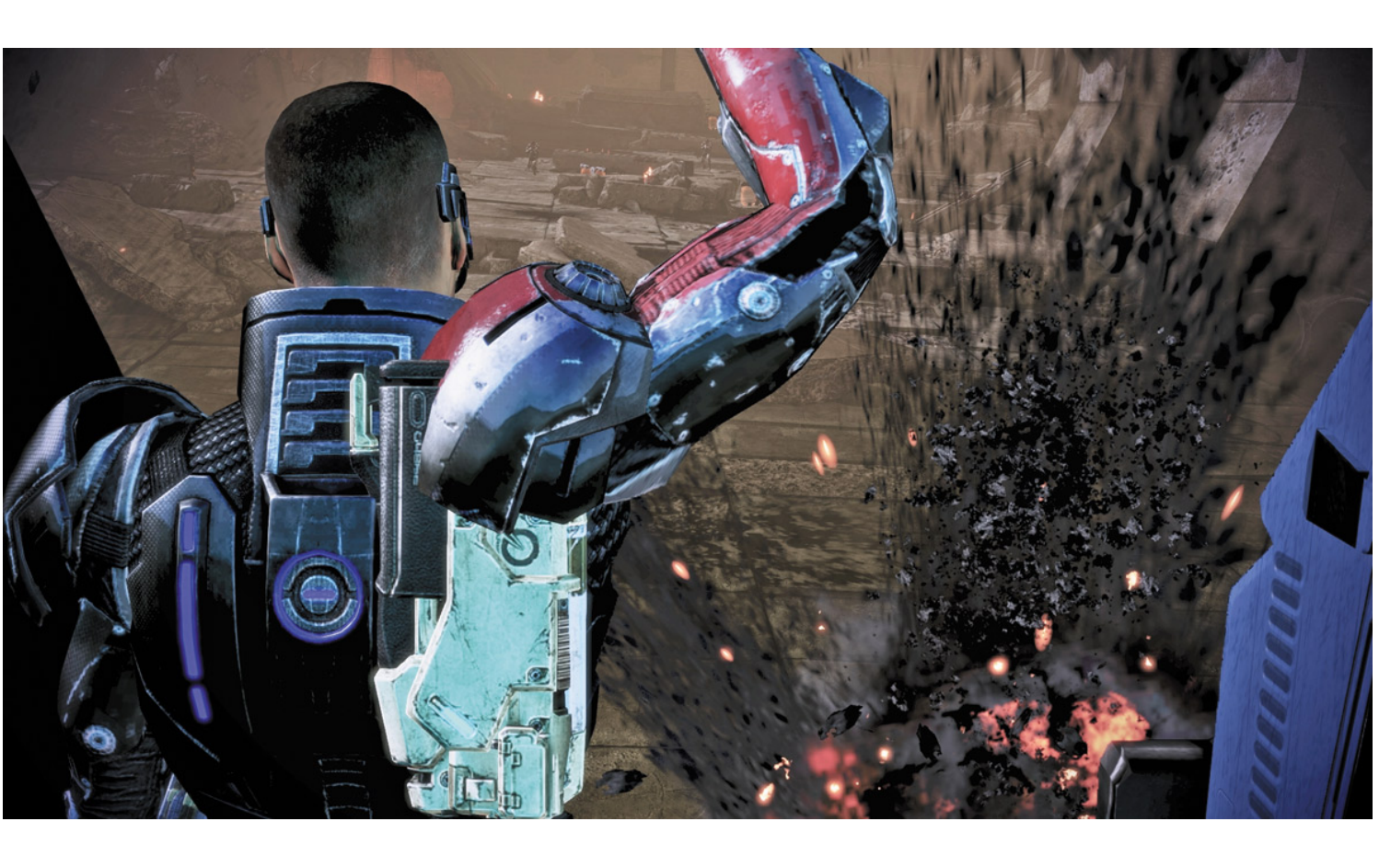
NOTE

Prangley's sacrifice can be averted if Jack is alive and well.



Side Missions

Tuchanka: Bomb



In the aftermath of rescuing Primarch Victus's son and his platoon from a hairy situation on Tuchanka, the team moves on to attempt defusing the Cerberus bomb on the planet.

It is revealed that this bomb is no Cerberus creation, but rather it is turian by design. A relic of the Krogan Rebellions from centuries before, the bomb was intended as a safeguard against another rebellion.

If it goes off, the already shaky prospects of bringing the krogan into the war effort will suffer a major setback, damaging Earth's chances of survival.

MISSION BRIEFING

Availability: After "Tuchanka: Turian Platoon"

Battlegrounds: After an explosive landing, expect traditional rough Tuchankan terrain leading up to the actual bomb. Cerberus is putting up resistance, but they also seem to be in a hurry to leave.

Don't get too careless in your pursuit, as their Combat Engineers will be setting sentry turrets to further stall your progress.

The major setpiece of the battle is at the actual bomb site. Lieutenant Victus will be attempting to defuse the device, leaving your squad to hold down a very small piece of real estate while Cerberus sends a small army after him.

Because of how quickly Victus can be hurt and killed, bring a squad that can kill human opponents as quickly as possible.

Consequence Overview: There are some conversations that can earn you alignment points during the mission.

The most important thing to remember is that by doing this mission, your krogan War Assets will not suffer any penalties later in the game, because the bomb will have been defused.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Credits: 5,000 (x2)	Rosenkov Materials Gauntlets
M-29 Incisor Sniper Rifle	Shotgun Blade Attachment
Med Kit (x2)	SMG Heat Sink
Pistol Melee Stunner	Sniper Rifle Concentration Module
Pistol Scope	Turret Control Schematics

HOT LANDING

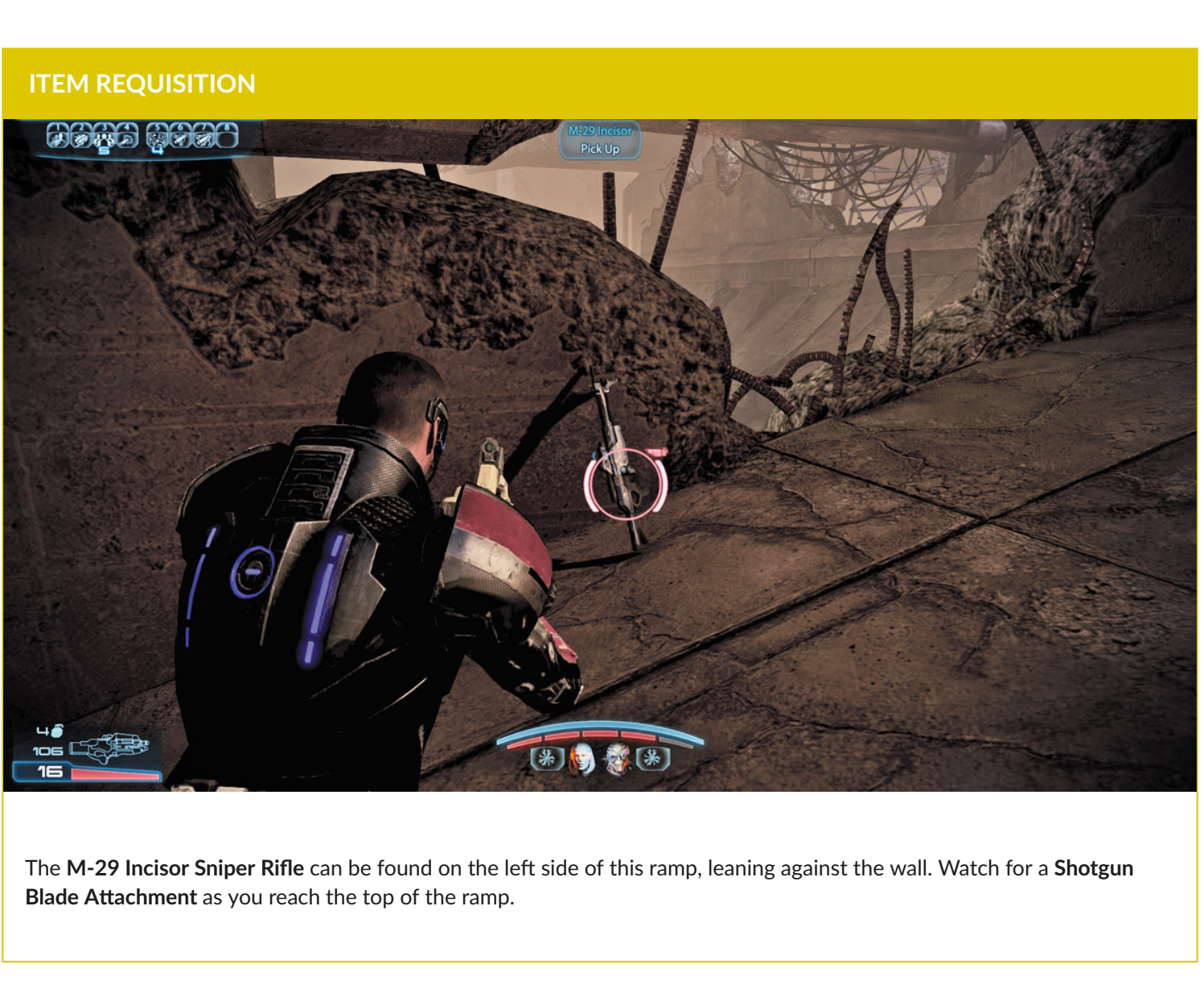
Under the cover of an artillery barrage, your team is inserted into a courtyard filled with low cover. Cerberus troops advance quickly on your position to suppress you.

Don't let the explosions from the artillery scare you, as you can storm through them without serious harm.

The blasts do make it difficult to determine enemy positions, so take the time to scan the area before making another advance; you could be missing hostiles at your flank.

Once you eliminate all Cerberus, the artillery fire will cease. Gather up ammo as needed, then advance up the ramp at the courtyard's far end.

ITEM REQUISITION



The **M-29 Incisor Sniper Rifle** can be found on the left side of this ramp, leaning against the wall. Watch for a **Shotgun Blade Attachment** as you reach the top of the ramp.

To the right of the weapon mod is another corridor, split into two distinct paths. Cerberus will try to set up overlapping fields of fire from cover strewn throughout.

The right passage typically starts with a Combat Engineer with a turret at the far end.

Despite their distance, make them priority targets for your squad while you thin out the resistance much closer to you.

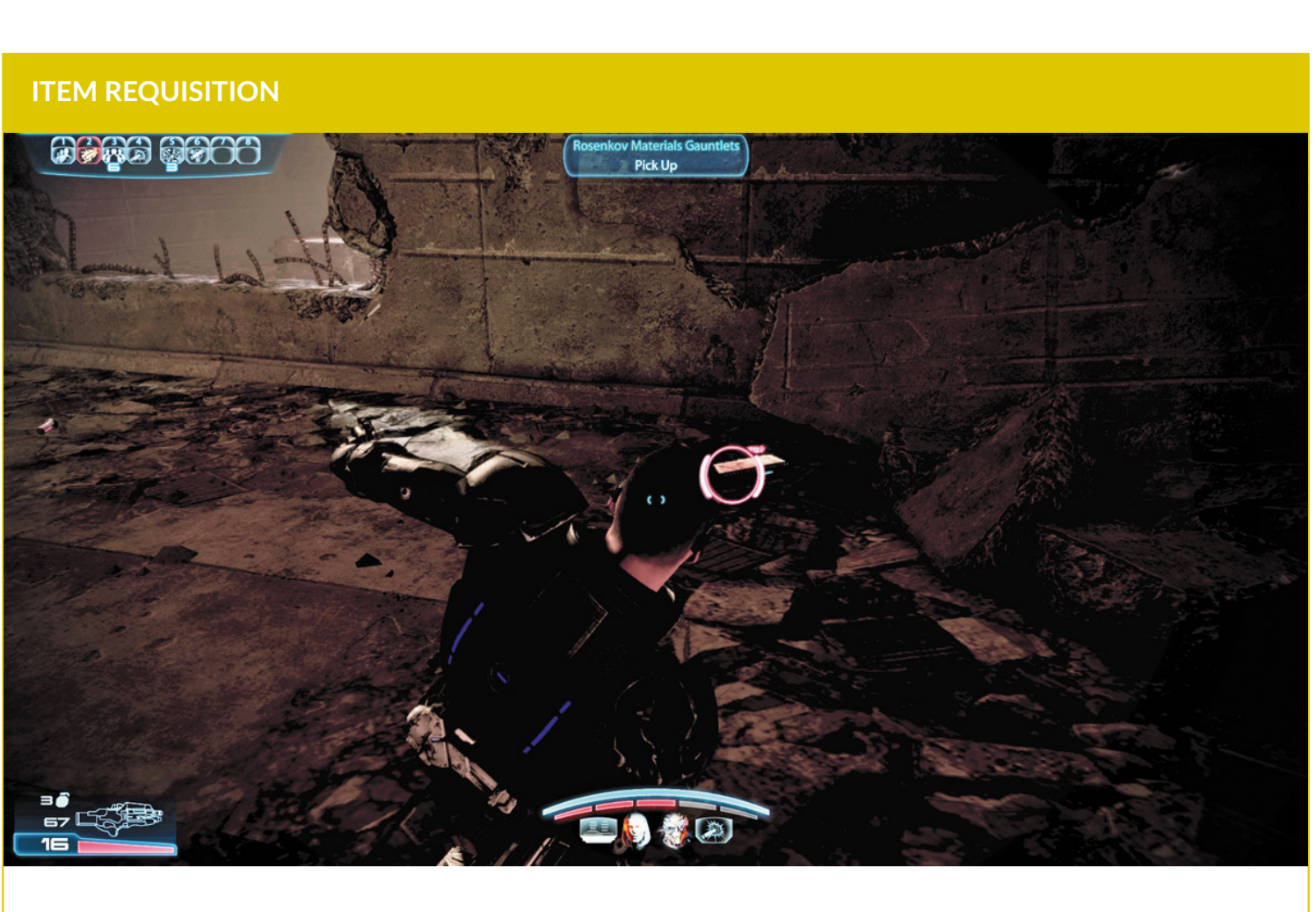
Remember that you can take out the deployable defense shields Cerberus is using for cover by disabling the generators.

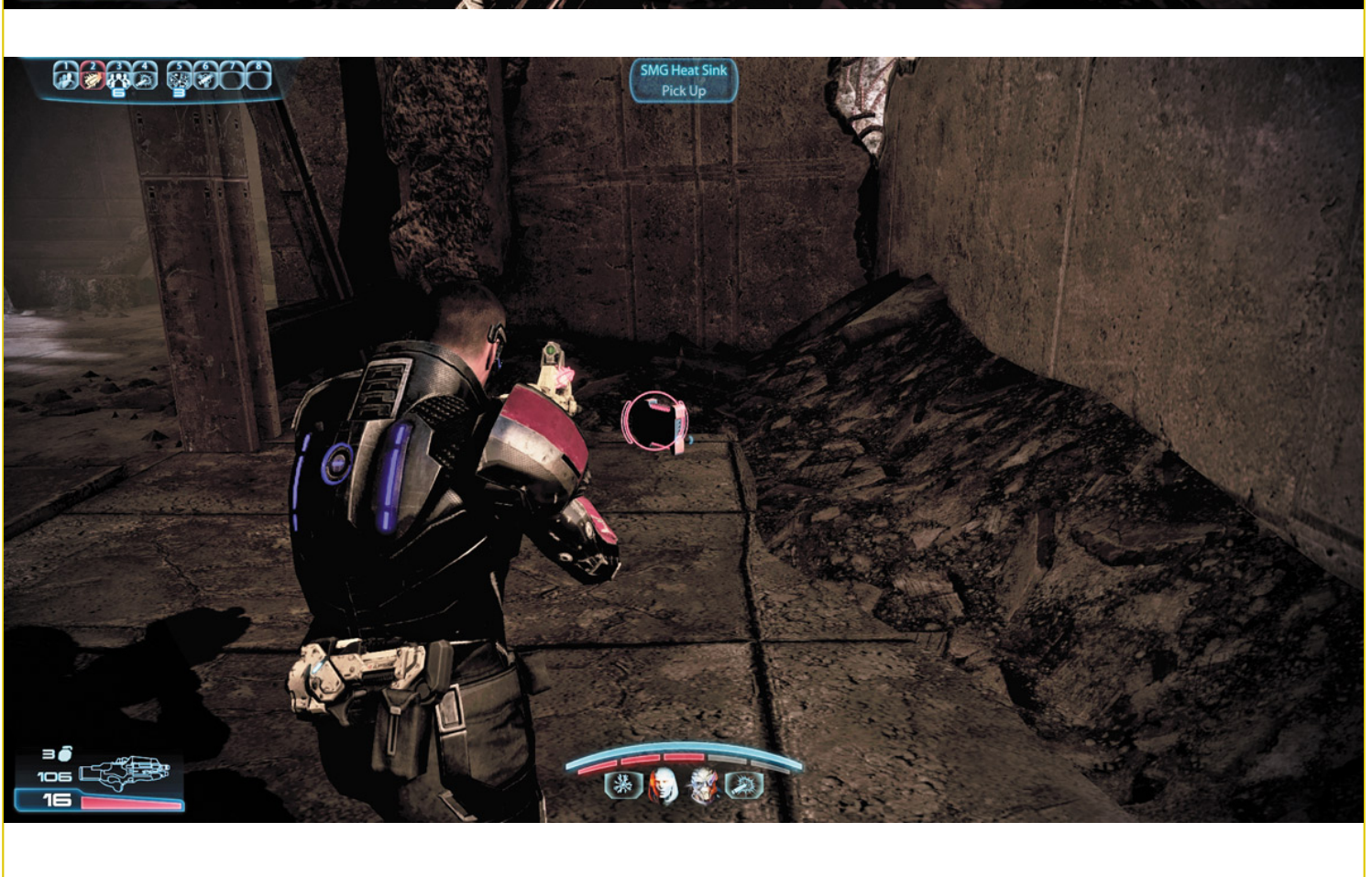
Securing the right side gives a strong flanking opportunity on the left side passage, as the enemy cannot safely dislodge you from your safe spot.

Take out the shield generator to deny incoming reinforcements the extra protection in grants.

If you're particularly aggressive, you could charge straight in and make a stand at the generator yourself, taking advantage of the rapid shield regeneration.

ITEM REQUISITION





Watch for a set of **Rosenkov Materials Gauntlets** in the right half corridor of this section. As you advance to the next section, look for an abandoned console you can salvage for **5,000 credits** .

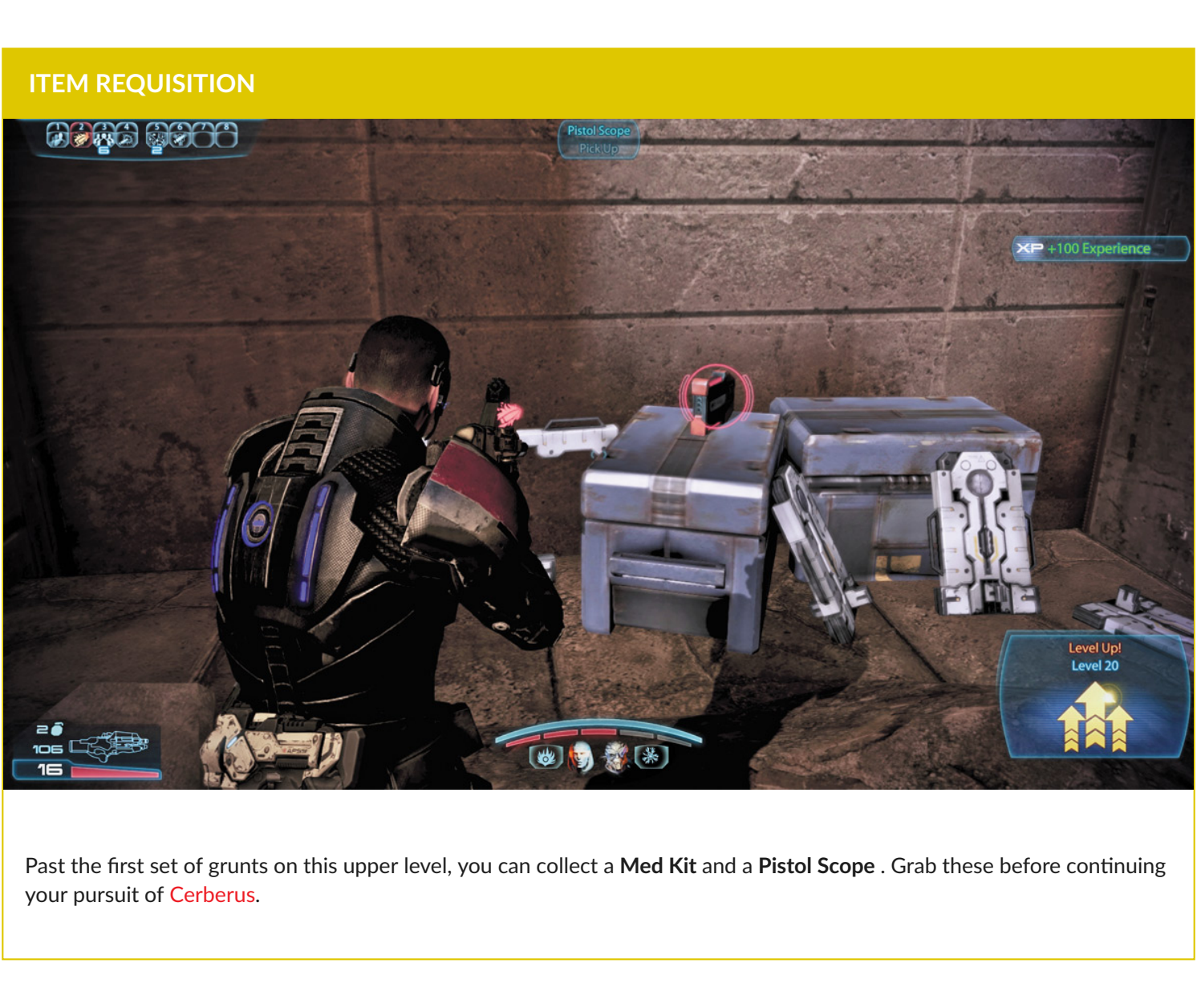
As you climb up the broken floors, don't miss the SMG Heat Sink just before the next shoot-out.

PRESSING ON

After you find the SMG mod, another group of Cerberus troops stands in your path, off to the left.

As you take them down, you overhear a Cerberus officer order his men to delay you as long as possible while the bulk of the force retreats.

ITEM REQUISITION



Past the first set of grunts on this upper level, you can collect a **Med Kit** and a **Pistol Scope** . Grab these before continuing your pursuit of Cerberus.

You can catch a team of Cerberus attempting to evacuate in a shuttle as you drop to a lower level. Pick them off, then move toward the Shield Pylon that was giving them protection.

A datapad nearby grants you another 5,000 credits, and an ammo crate helps restore any thermal clips or grenades you might be missing.

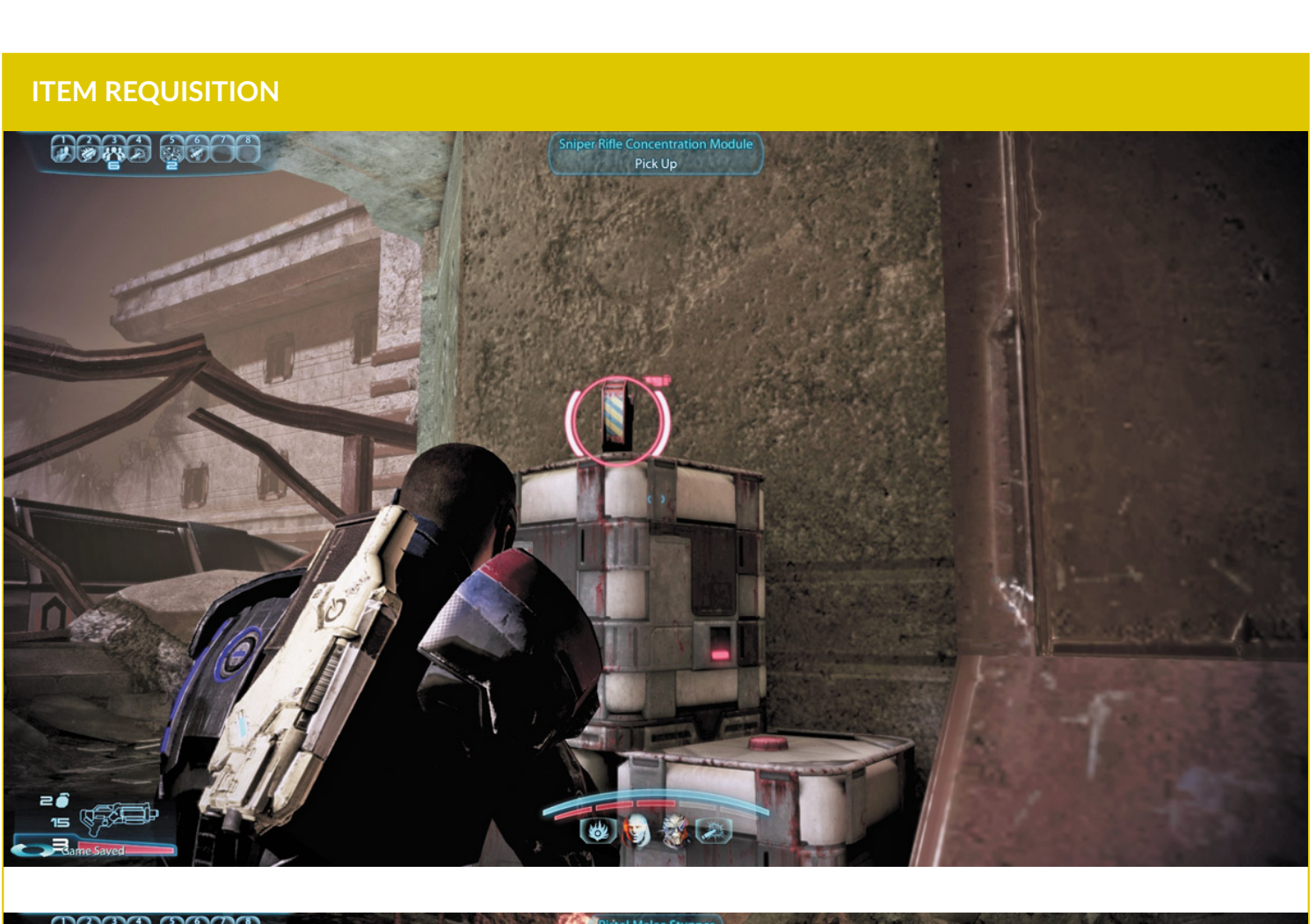
The Cerberus retreat continues. Some of them fall back in the distance and head toward a waiting shuttle, while others continue to fight a delaying action against you.

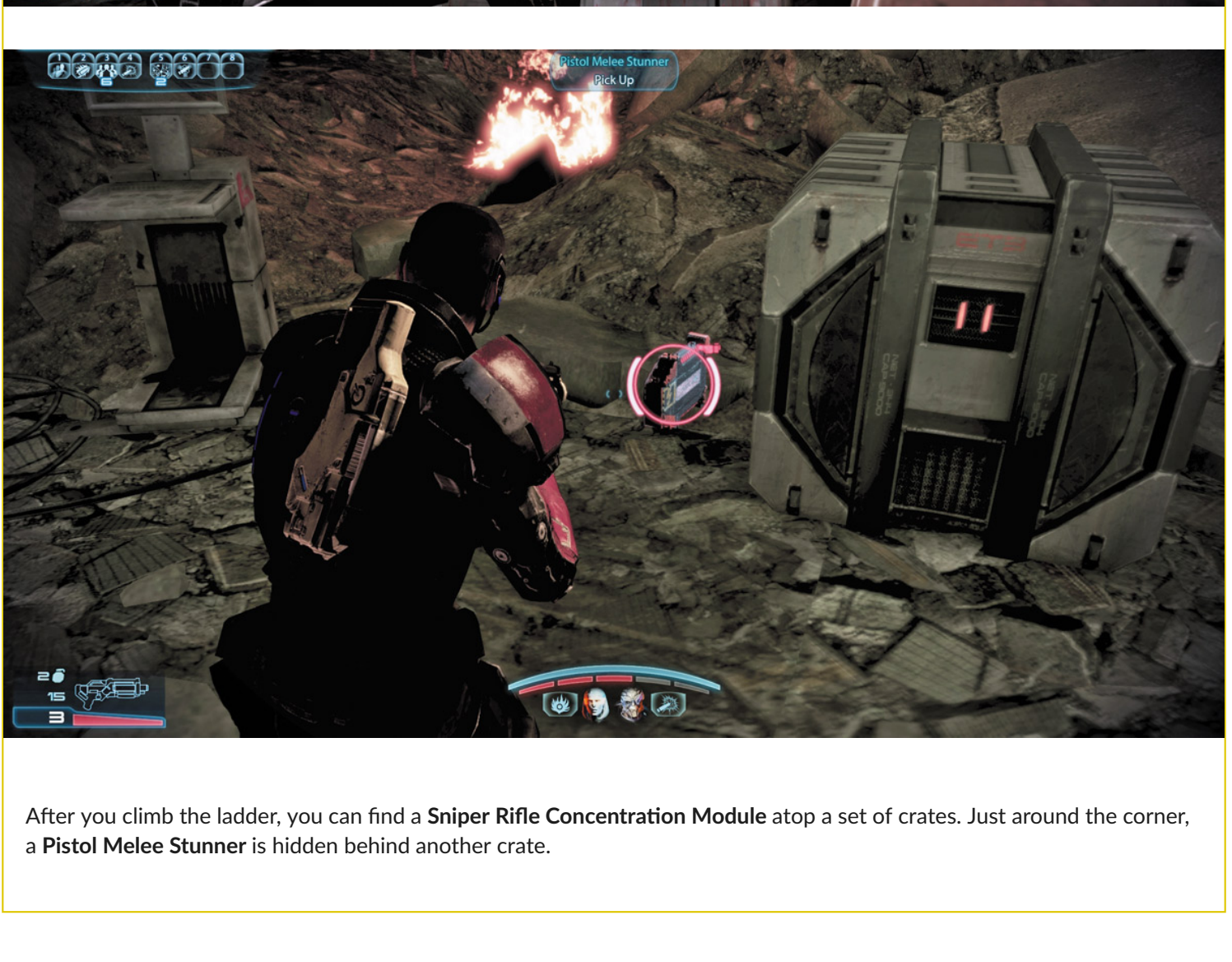
It's relatively safe to ignore the retreating hostiles, but if you're trying to gun down everything in your path, don't ignore the troops closest to you. There's enough cover for them to use to flank you.

Once they are down, advance forward, just as a Cerberus shuttle clears the area with any survivors you may have left.

You can get your first look at the bomb here. Take the ladder to your right to keep moving forward.

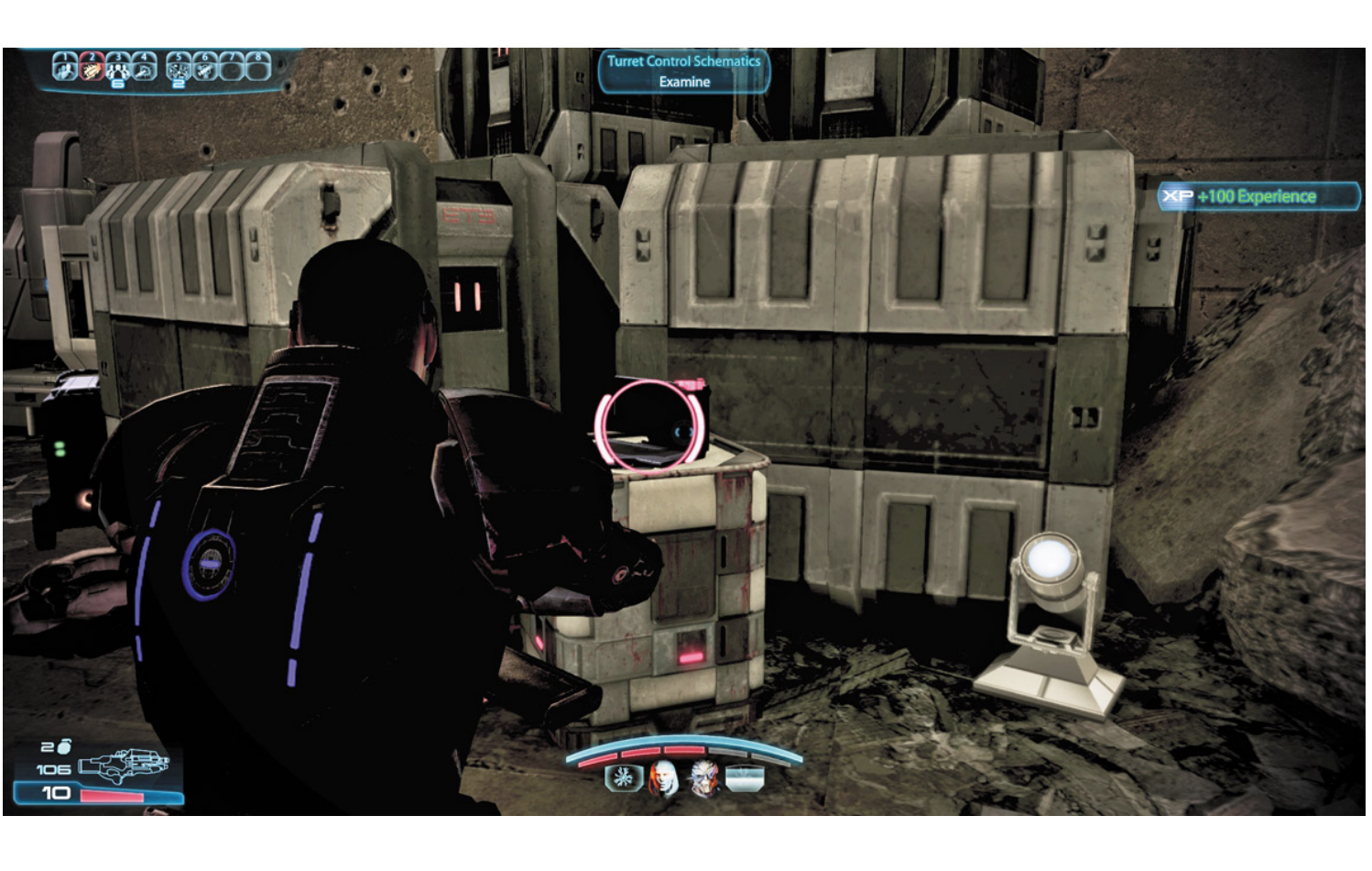
ITEM REQUISITION





After you climb the ladder, you can find a **Sniper Rifle Concentration Module** atop a set of crates. Just around the corner, a **Pistol Melee Stunner** is hidden behind another crate.

After the pistol mod, follow the path leading down to another corridor where Cerberus troops are hastily abandoning their posts.



Don't get too eager to rush forward: A Combat Engineer has dropped a turret to catch reckless players off guard.

After dealing with this threat, collect the Med Kit and a set of Turret Control Schematics that you'll use for a side quest available on the Citadel later in the game.

(see "Citadel: Cerberus Automated Turret Schematics")

DEFUSING THE SITUATION

Lieutenant Victus

You've finally reached the bomb site, and Lieutenant Victus is attempting to disarm the weapon.

His guards are taken down by sniper fire, and your squad of three is the only thing standing between Cerberus and him. It's time for a last stand.

The courtyard you fight in has three distinct drop zones that Cerberus shuttles will try to use to deploy troops to overwhelm you.

If you have grenades or any other area-of-effect powers, now is the time to use them. Try to catch the enemy just as the shuttle doors open with a grenade, or set up power combos with your squadmates.

The weaker they are upon landing to fight means the quicker your team can clean them up.

Victus is extremely vulnerable while defusing the bomb, and it only takes a few seconds of sustained enemy fire to kill him.

Keep constantly scanning for stragglers who may have slipped past your kill zones, and pay attention to Victus's health bar.

If it starts to fall, quickly seek out his assailants and prioritize them over everything else; if Victus dies, the mission fails.

Atlas
Shields
Lieutenant Victus

Eventually, an Atlas joins the fray, and this marks the last push by Cerberus.

Your squad must keep the mech occupied at all costs, as it will attempt to snipe at Victus with its cannon, causing grievous damage to him.

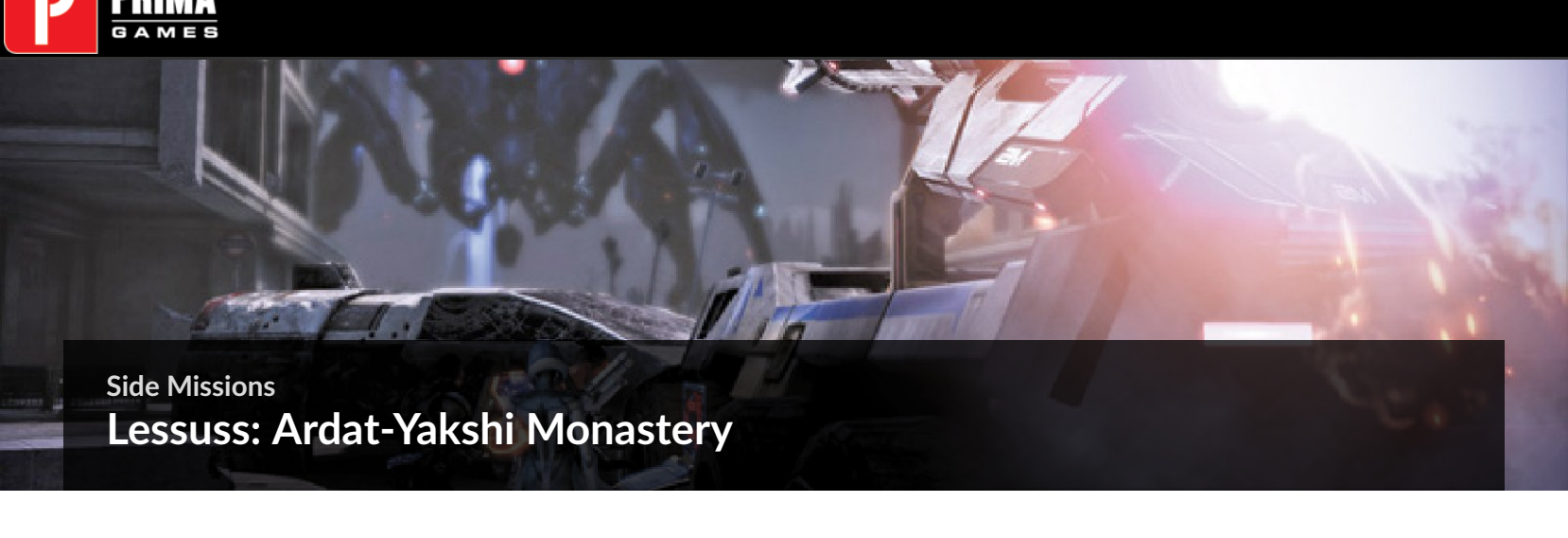
The Atlas will receive more ground troop reinforcements, but until it's dead, try to keep the pressure on it alone. Once you destroy it, kill off the remaining soldiers, and Victus will be safe.

Unfortunately, the bomb defusing does not go as planned, and the young turian must make a tough decision to ensure the device is incapable of detonating.

Following the successful but costly mission, Primarch Victus and Urdnot Wreav have a confrontation in the Normandy's War Room.

You're able to choose how to settle it, gaining Paragon or Renegade points in the process.

Regardless of your choices, Primarch Victus admits that he has just learned the harshest lesson a father could regarding war and sacrifice.



Side Missions

Lessuss: Ardat-Yakshi Monastery

With the Reapers now encroaching into asari space, their fleets are fully engaged in battles to protect their homeworld, leaving many colonies undefended in the face of the onslaught.

A distress signal from a colony in the Nimbus Cluster has asari high command concerned, but they are unable or unwilling to tell you what their commandos were doing on that world or what you can expect when you arrive.

It eventually comes to light that the colony is a haven for asari Ardat-Yakshi and that the Reapers have a very specific interest in these genetic aberrations.

MISSION BREIFING

Availability: During "Priority: Perseus Veil"

Battlegrounds: Your visit to this colony begins peacefully, but you are still filled with a certain amount of dread.

Parts of the monastery are without power, making exploration difficult, even with flashlights on. Eventually, the Reapers will ambush your squad.

The monastery is filled with Husks, Cannibals, and Marauders.

If this mission is taken on as soon as it becomes available, you will have your first encounter with arguably the most dangerous Reaper unit in the game: the Banshee.

You must race to kill this threat before it gets close to you or anyone in your squad.

NOTE

Liara is not a required squadmate for this mission, but her unique perspective on the Ardat-Yakshi can make her an informative companion.

Consequence Overview: Ardat-Yakshi are extremely dangerous asari who grow stronger whenever they mate...usually at the cost of their lover's life.

There's a good reason why the asari high command wanted to keep this place a secret, and why they want to ensure none of the women here leave alive.

How you handle this delicate situation will weigh upon the total war effort and on your moral alignment.

NOTE

Shepards imported from *Mass Effect 2* have the chance to meet up with the asari justicar Samara during this mission, assuming she survived the climactic battle against the Collectors.

Her appearance at this monastery changes many events throughout the mission, and reveals more about a pair of Ardat-Yakshi found within.

ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

Assault Rifle Precision Scope	Assault Rifle Stability Damper
Credits: 7,500; 5,000	Disciple Shotgun
Gallae's Electronic Signature	Medical Station (x3)
Med Kit	PDA
Pistol Melee Stunner	Serrice Council Shoulder Guards
Sniper Rifle Spare Ammo	

DARKNESS

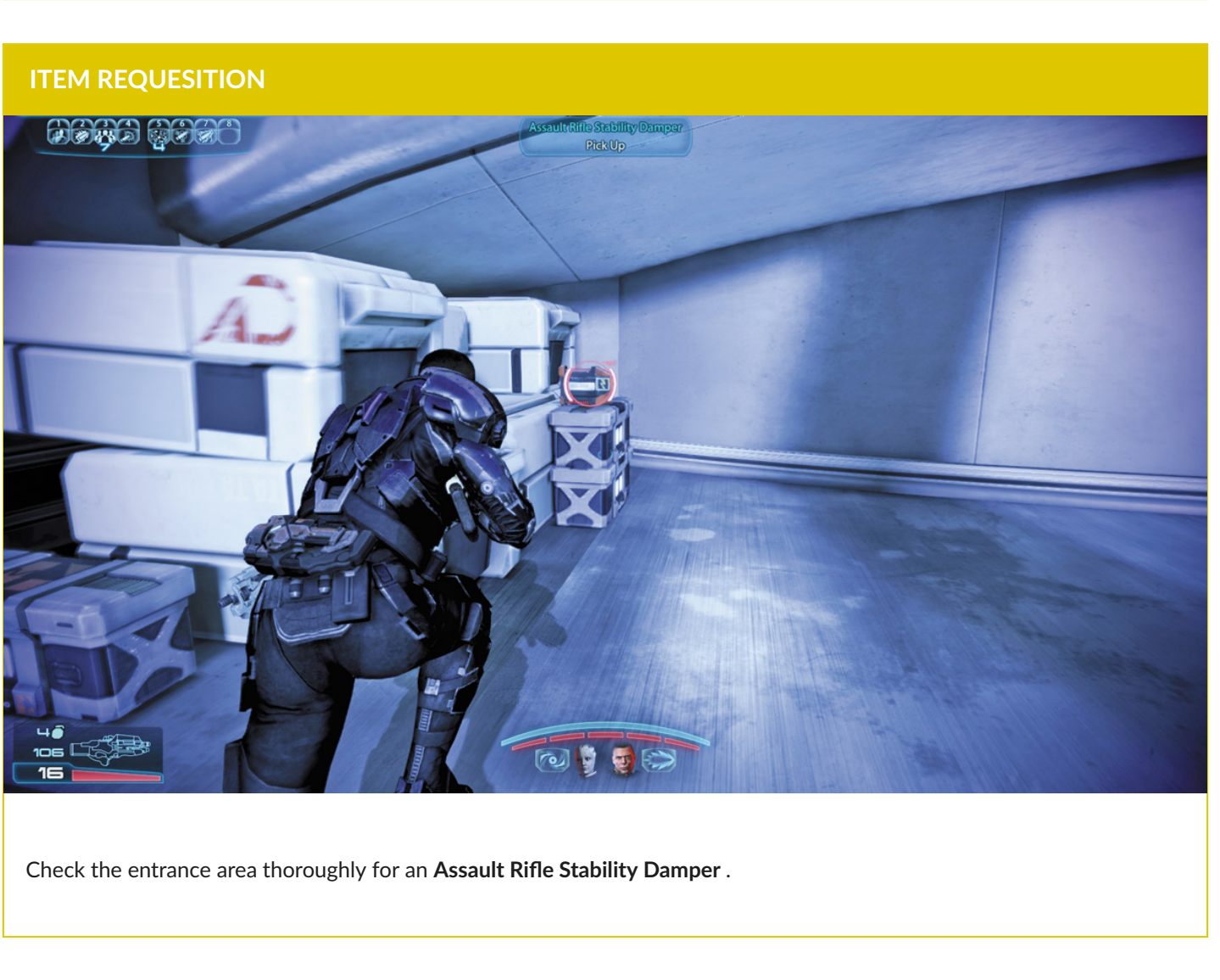
The shuttle ride to the monastery is fairly uneventful, though it is possible to earn alignment points during the conversation along the way.

You arrive at the entrance to the monastery and are greeted by peaceful silence.

NOTE

Players who imported a save with Samara still alive will find a second shuttle at the landing zone. It can be inspected for additional dialogue.

ITEM REQUESITION



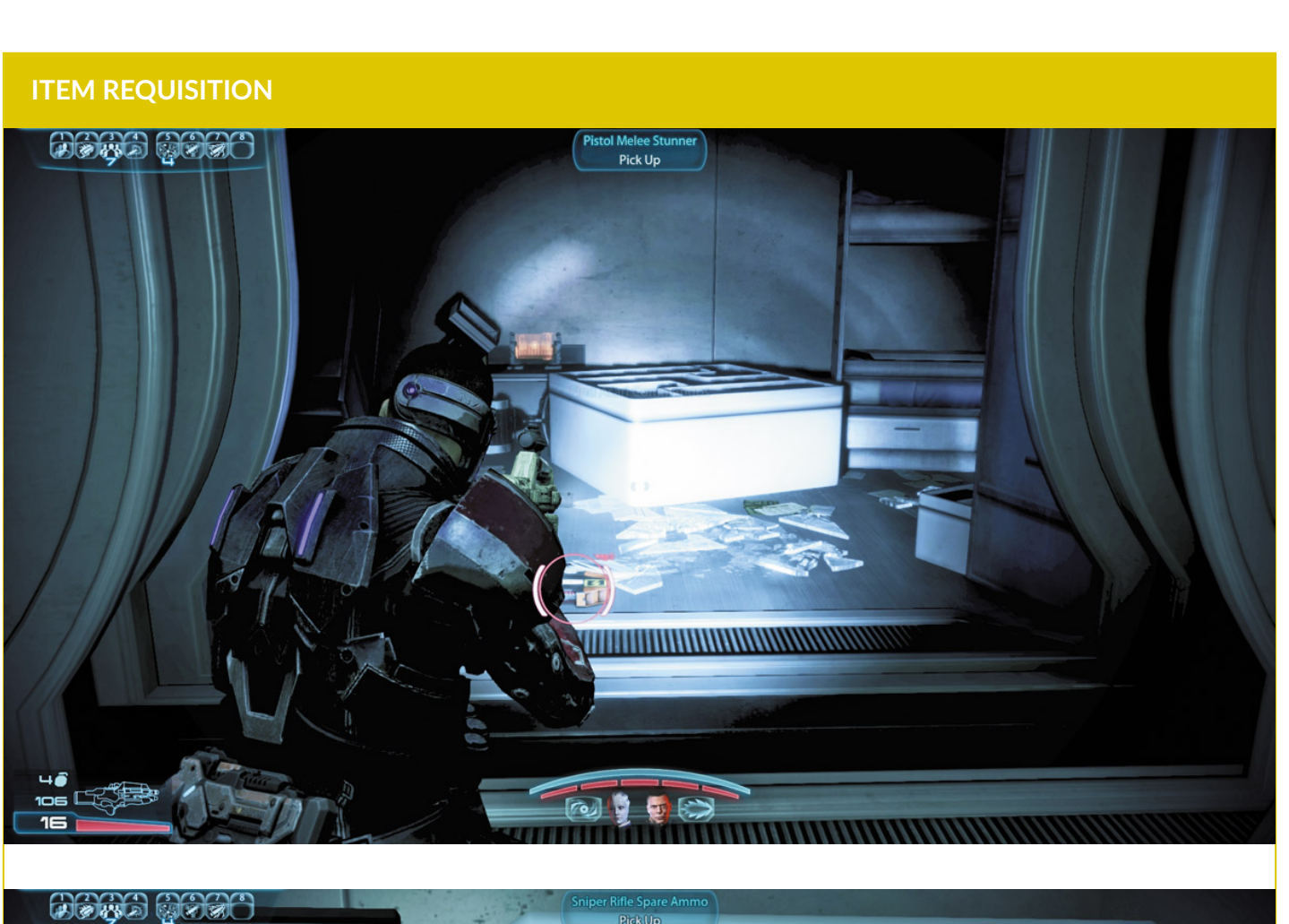
Check the entrance area thoroughly for an **Assault Rifle Stability Damper** .

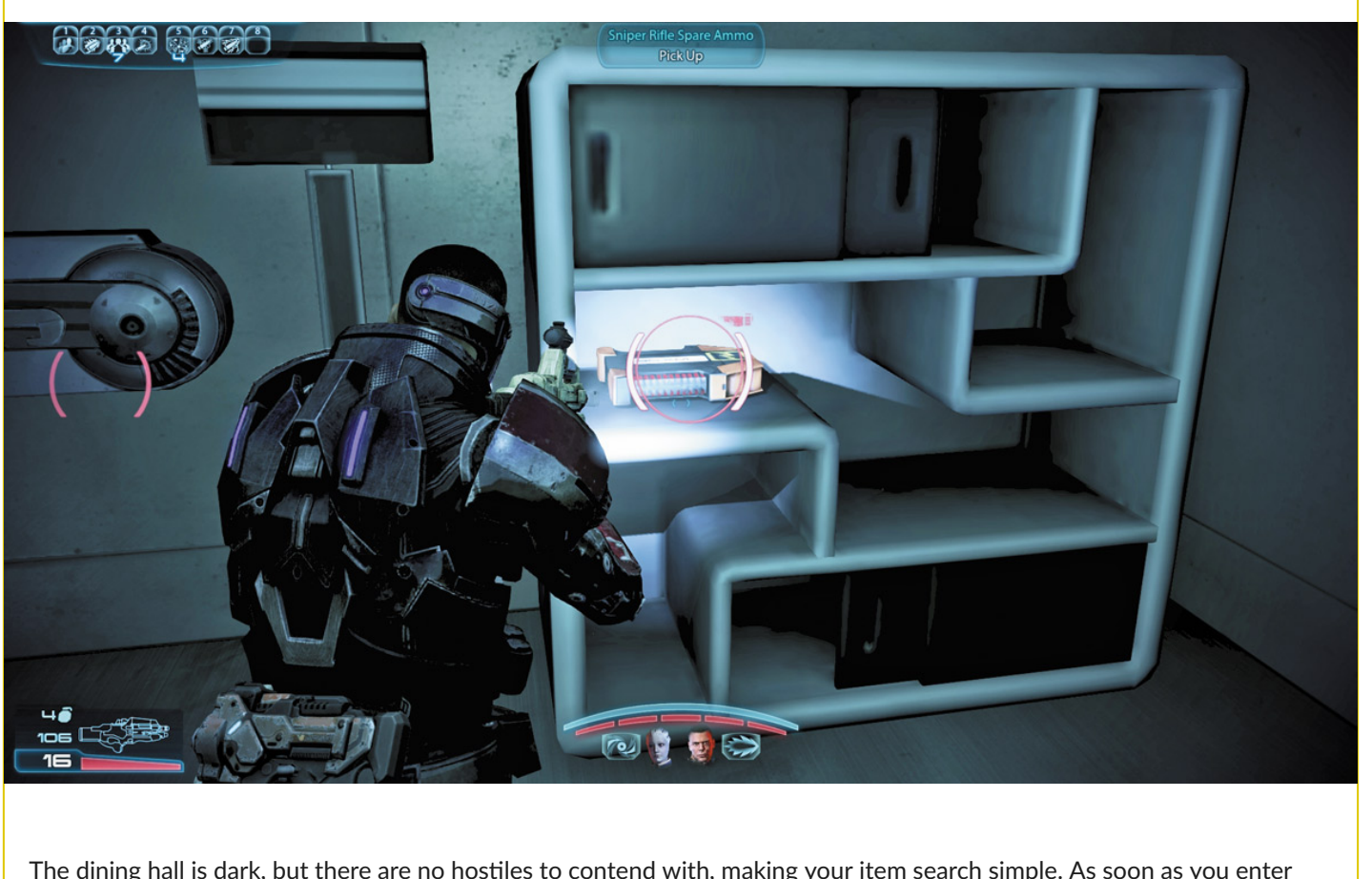
With the LZ clear of activity, the squad has to move indoors. The elevator is out, requiring you to use the emergency ladders to get deeper into the facility.

Eventually, you reach a dining hall, with screams echoing throughout the area, but there is no movement other than your own.

It's dark, and the squad is forced to use their flashlights.

ITEM REQUISITION



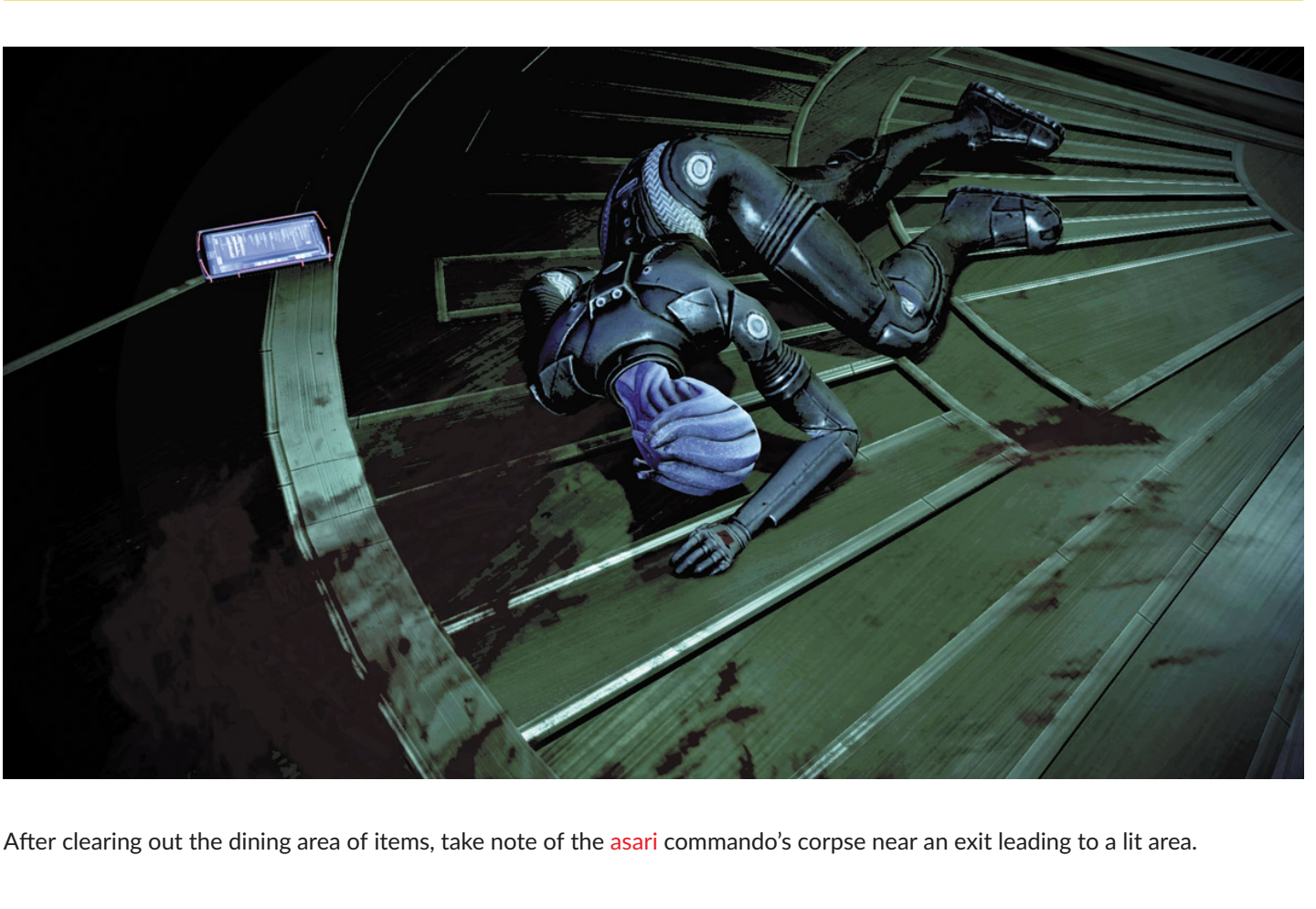


The dining hall is dark, but there are no hostiles to contend with, making your item search simple. As soon as you enter this room, make a left and begin a circuit of the room.

A **Pistol Melee Stunner** is located in an abandoned bedroom near Gallae's Electronic Signature.

In a room to the right of the elevator shaft, you find a **Sniper Rifle Spare Ammo** mod, along with a wall safe with **7,500 credits** .

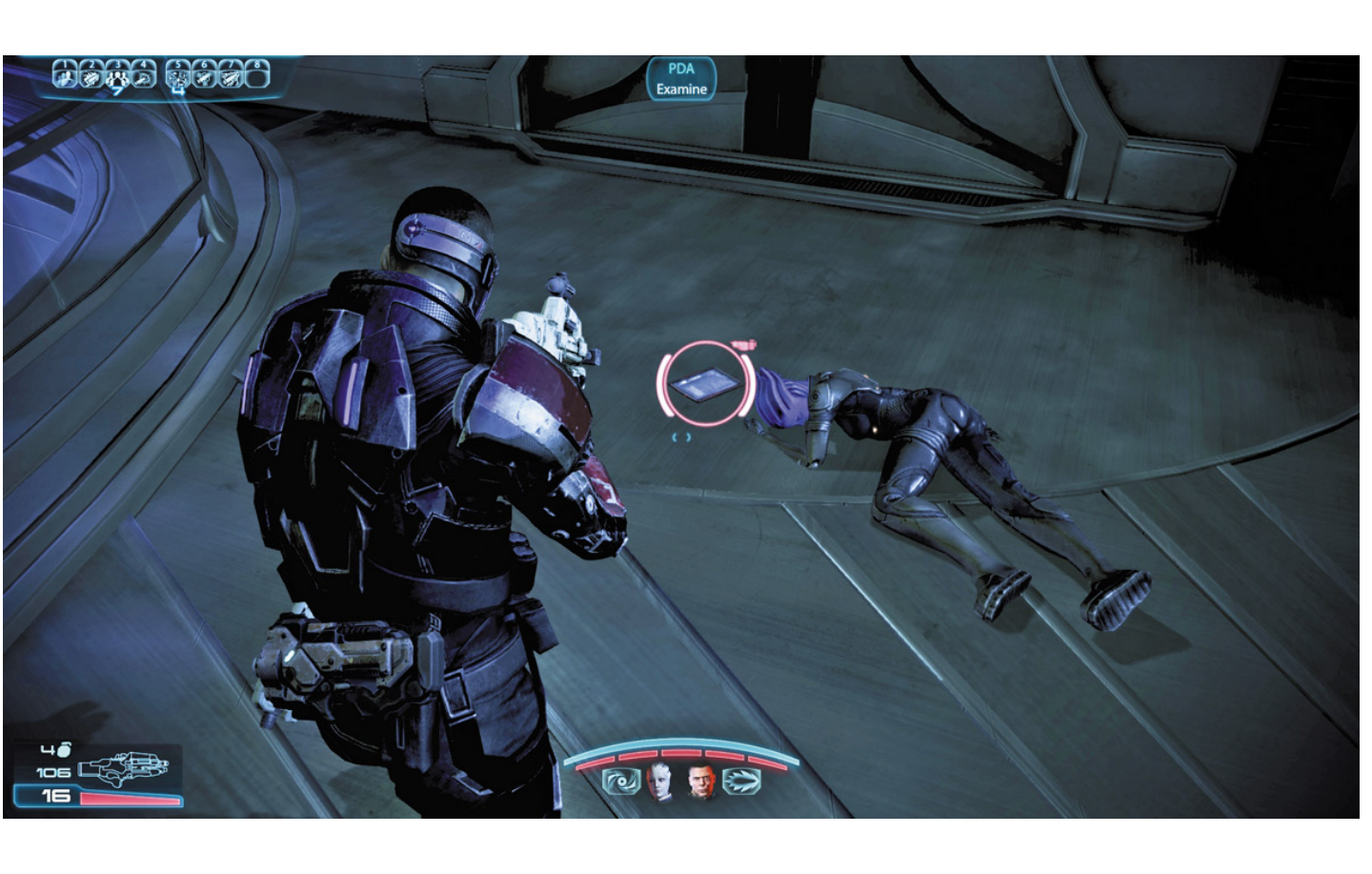
Be sure to inspect any datapads or terminals you come across for additional information about the monastery.



After clearing out the dining area of items, take note of the asari commando's corpse near an exit leading to a lit area.

The PDA next to her marks the ultimate destination of the commando team, as well as their objective: the destruction of the monastery, using a bomb planted in the great hall.

You get a dialogue option here, and then the team moves on, now with a goal in mind.



The enemy continues to remain elusive as you press through a lit corridor and bypass a security door.

After breaking through the lock, check to the right side of the catwalk to locate another asari commando's body.

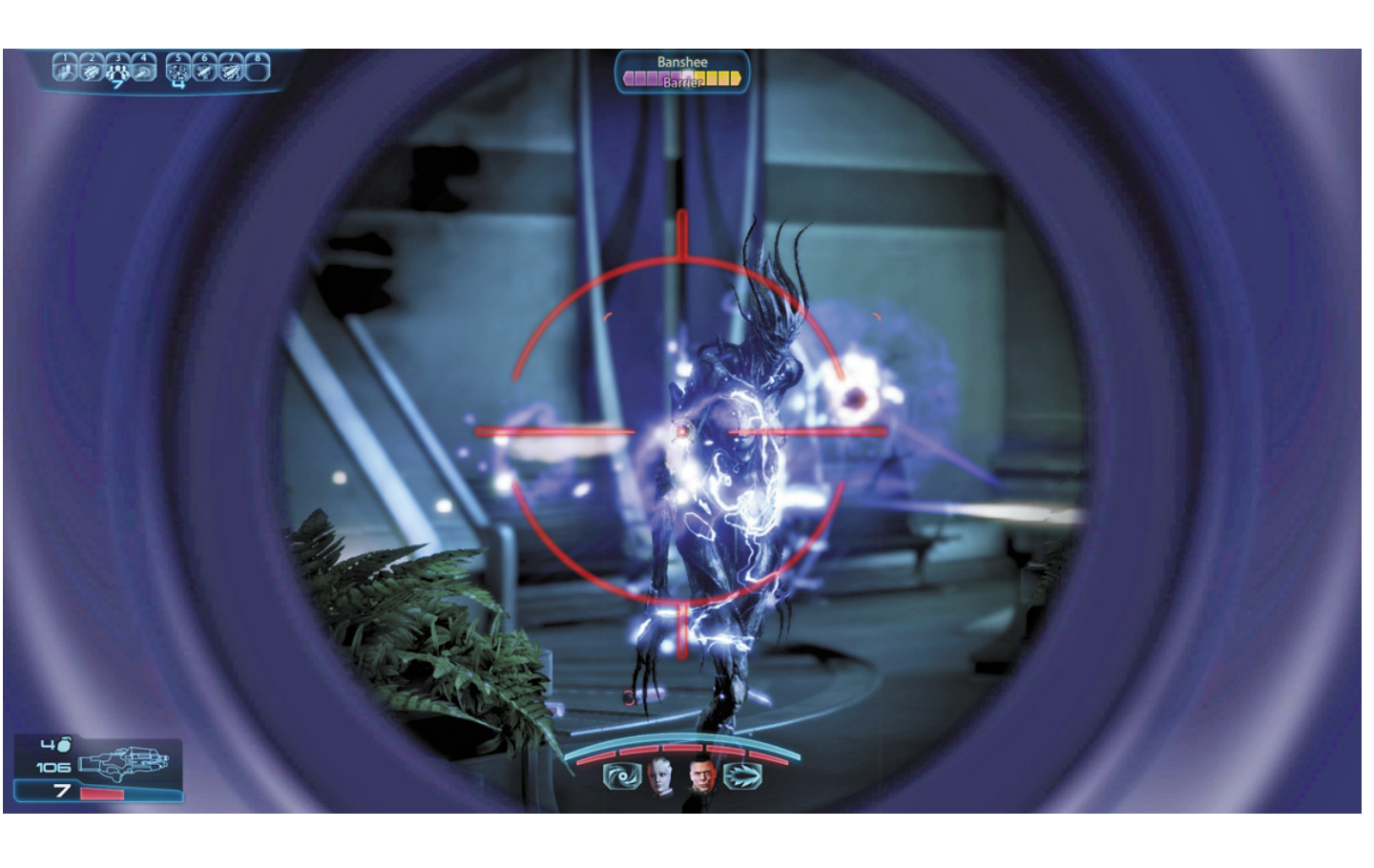
Her PDA contains a last message to her lover somewhere on the Citadel. This begins the "Citadel: Asari Widow" side quest.

NOTE

Samara will make her first appearance at the temple here, conversing with Shepard after the security door is breached.

The exit to this area leads to a wide courtyard and to your first hostile contact of the mission.

SCREAMING DEATH



The first Banshee you encounter simply teleports in with little warning beyond her bloodcurdling shrieks. Banshees are a grave threat.

They fling Biotic blasts that tear through your shields and prevent any form of regeneration, except when you use Medi-Gel.

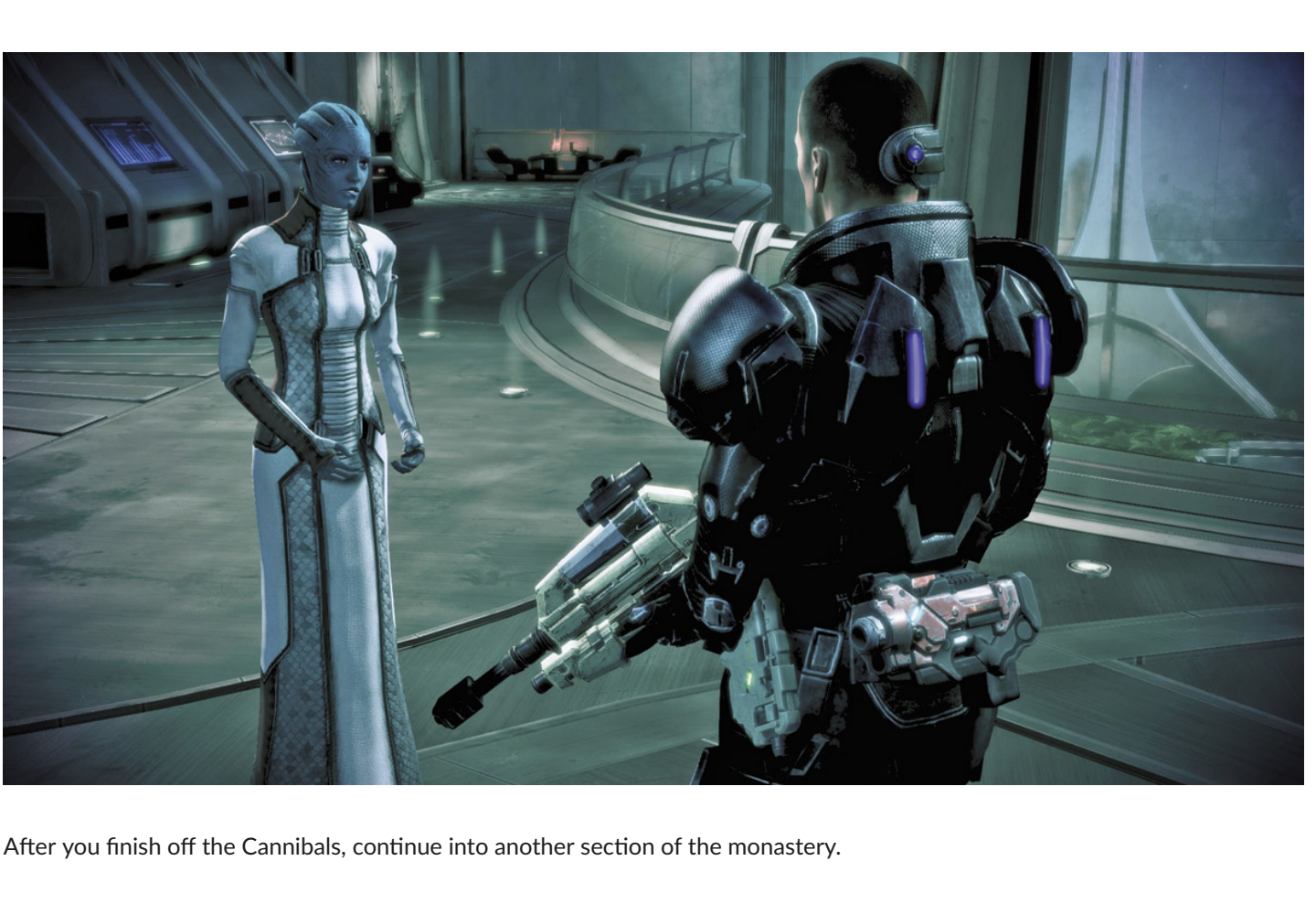
Their ability to warp in rapid succession toward a target makes keeping them away difficult, and you want to stay beyond their reach at all times.

They can kill Shepard or disable a squadmate in a single, brutal melee grab!

Cannibal
Health

When you defeat the Banshee, Cannibals begin crawling into the courtyard. Watch out for attempted flanking maneuvers as you engage them.

Remember you can kill one Cannibal to use as bait to draw a large group toward the new corpse.



After you finish off the Cannibals, continue into another section of the monastery.

You come across an asari named Falere, who is on the run from another Cannibal, but your team is able to save her.

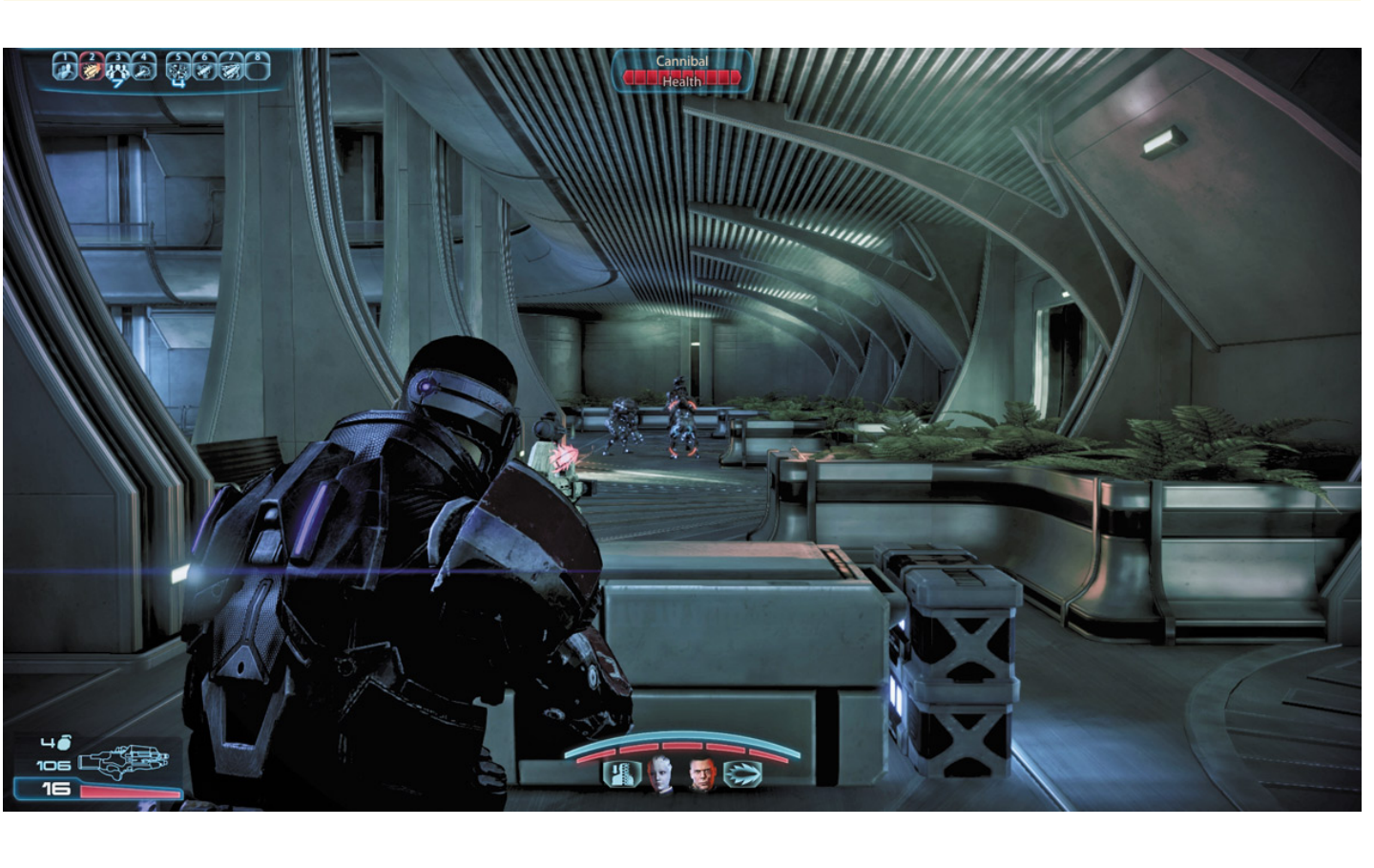
She reveals herself to be Ardat-Yakshi; she wants to survive the Reaper assault and save her sister Rila, currently in the hands of the enemy.

Your responses to her can earn you Paragon or Renegade points. When it's revealed a bomb has been planted in the great hall, Falere dashes off to save Rila.

You're forced to give chase on foot.

NOTE

If Samara is at the monastery, she will be present for this conversation as well, leading to an interesting reveal.

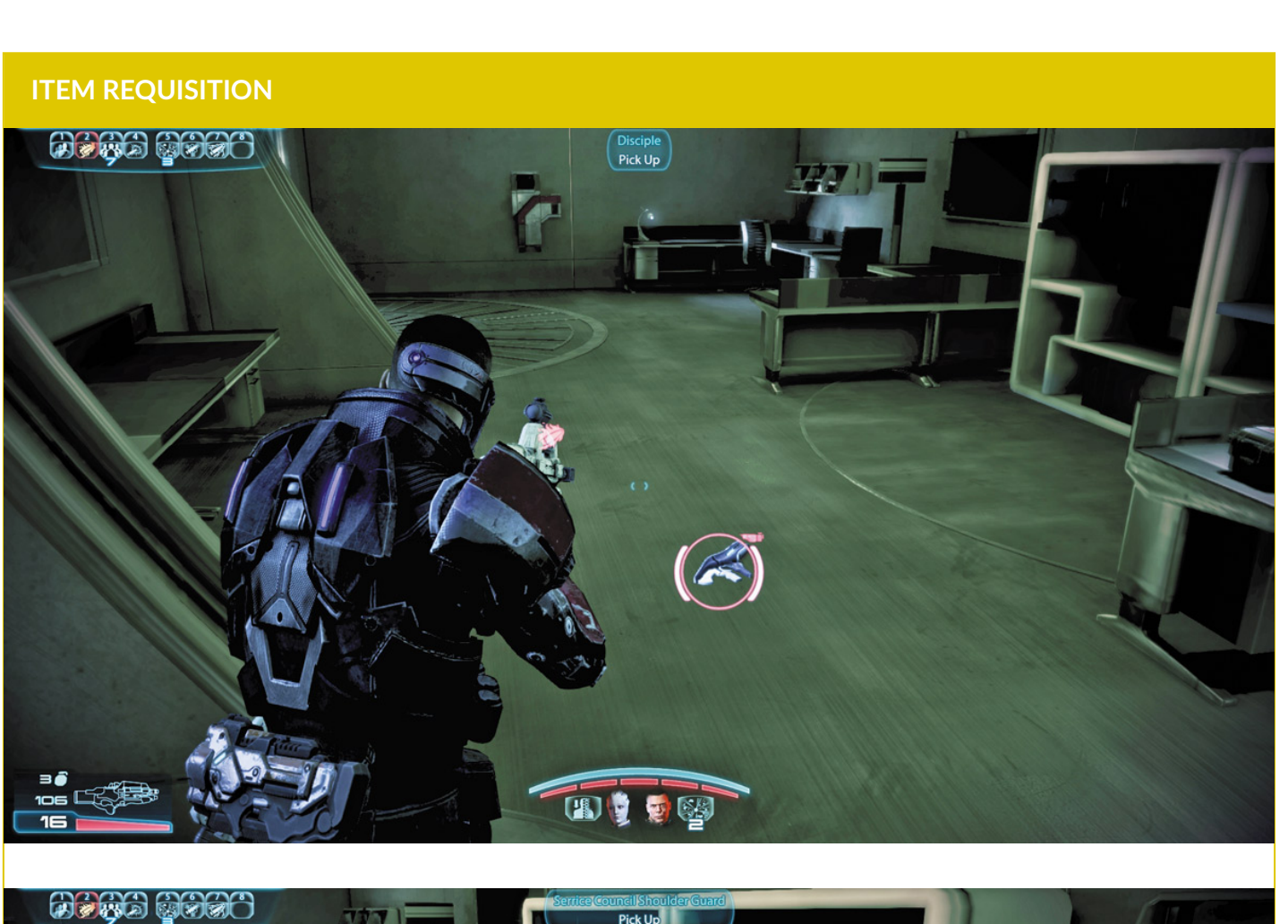


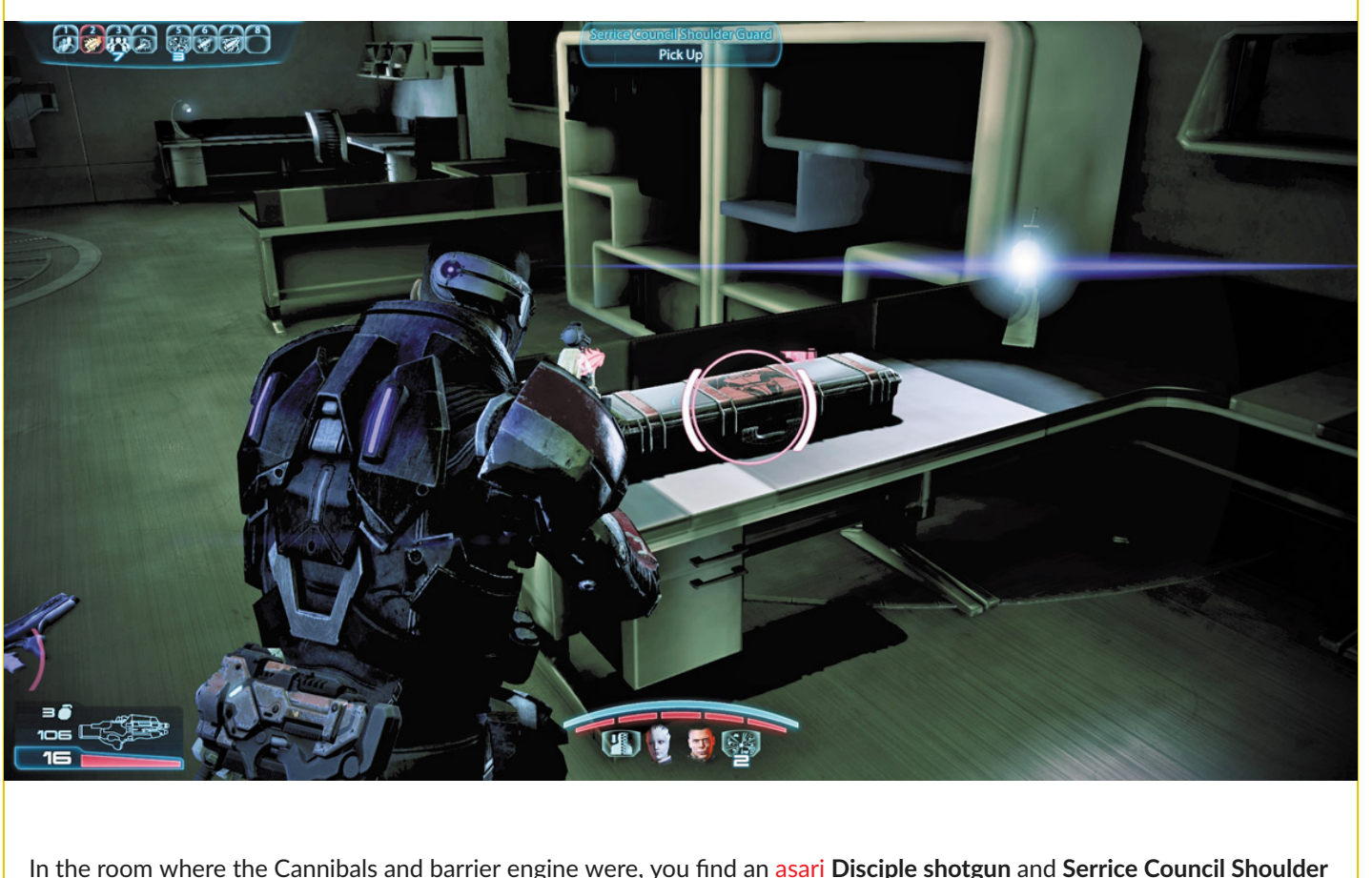
Before entering the door to the next combat, there is a computer to the left of the door that you can examine for experience.

Continue through another passage, and you come across a squad of Reaper troops led by a Marauder.

Engaging them opens another room to your right that is full of Cannibals enhanced by a barrier engine. Try to disable the engine first.

ITEM REQUISITION





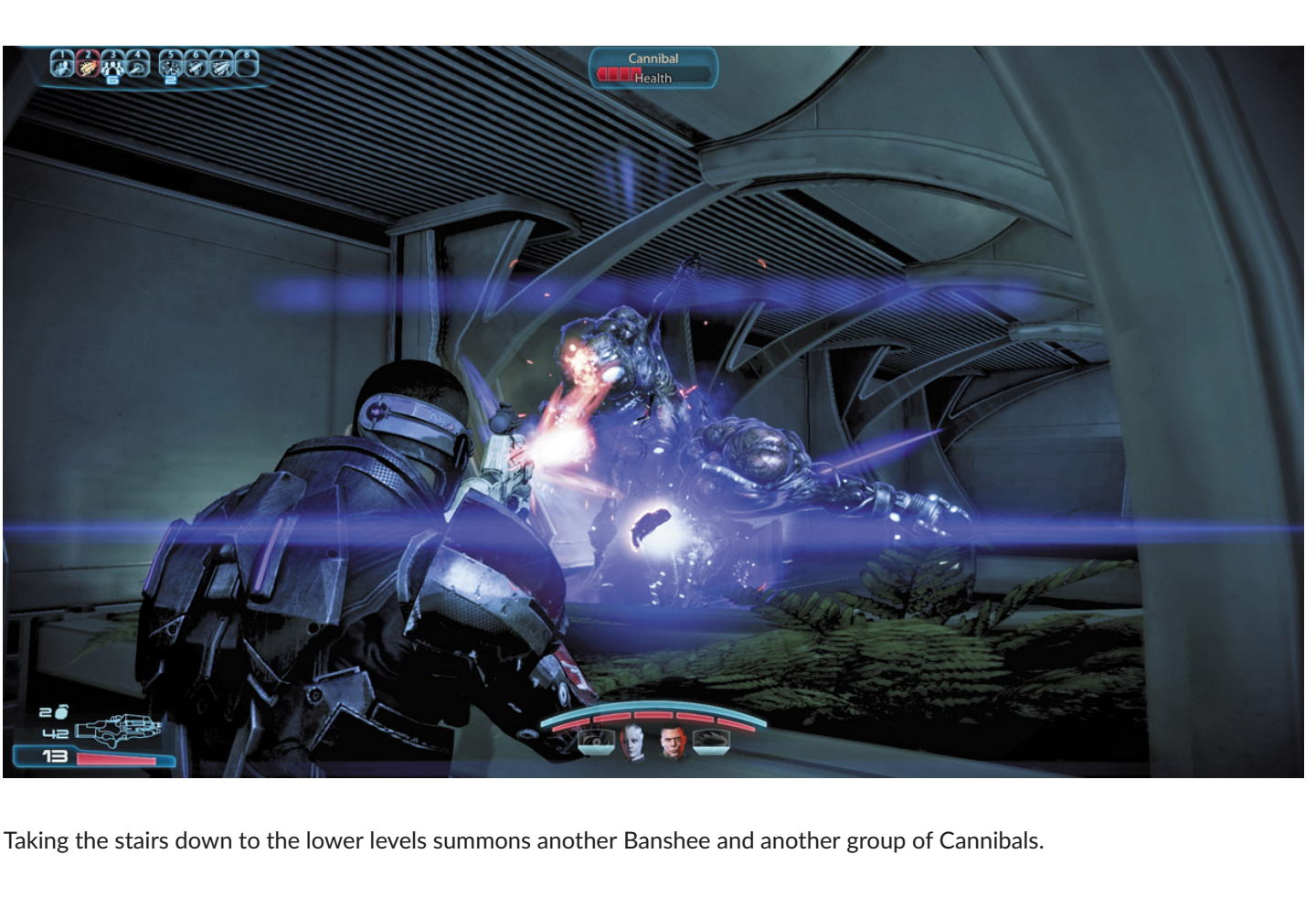
In the room where the Cannibals and barrier engine were, you find an asari **Disciple shotgun** and **Serrice Council Shoulder Guards** .

Consider equipping the Disciple right away. It may not be as lethal as other weapons of its class, but it is light, allowing for a more flexible loadout.

It also has a chance of causing most humanoid threats to stagger with each shot, making it great as a support weapon. A Medical Station is nearby to help refill your **Medi-Gel** reserves.

On the opposite side of this upper floor, a room with a wall safe contains **5,000 credits** .

There's also a weapon bench in case you want to switch out weapons and mods, and there are two computers that you can examine for info.



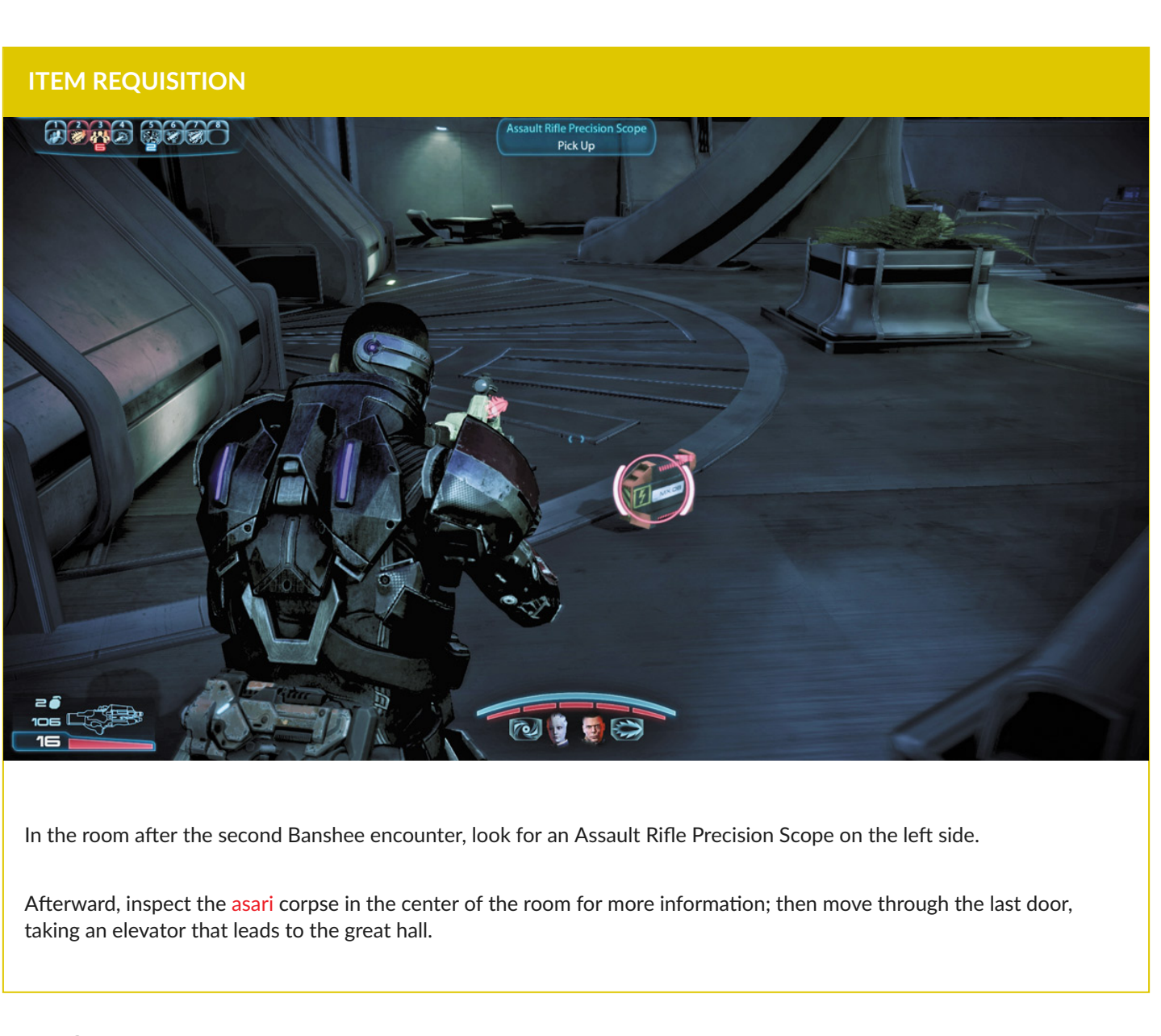
Taking the stairs down to the lower levels summons another Banshee and another group of Cannibals.

As always, make the Banshee a top priority, as their teleportation ability can allow them to quickly flank your squad. Don't be afraid to fall back up the stairs if necessary.

With the Banshee out of the picture, you can easily deal with the Cannibals.

Clear the room and then bypass the door lock.

ITEM REQUISITION



In the room after the second Banshee encounter, look for an Assault Rifle Precision Scope on the left side.

Afterward, inspect the asari corpse in the center of the room for more information; then move through the last door, taking an elevator that leads to the great hall.

THE GREAT HALL

As you enter the great hall, check for Medical Stations on the first sets of pillars. There's also a Med Kit in the center of the room. Stock up if necessary.

Things are about to get hot.

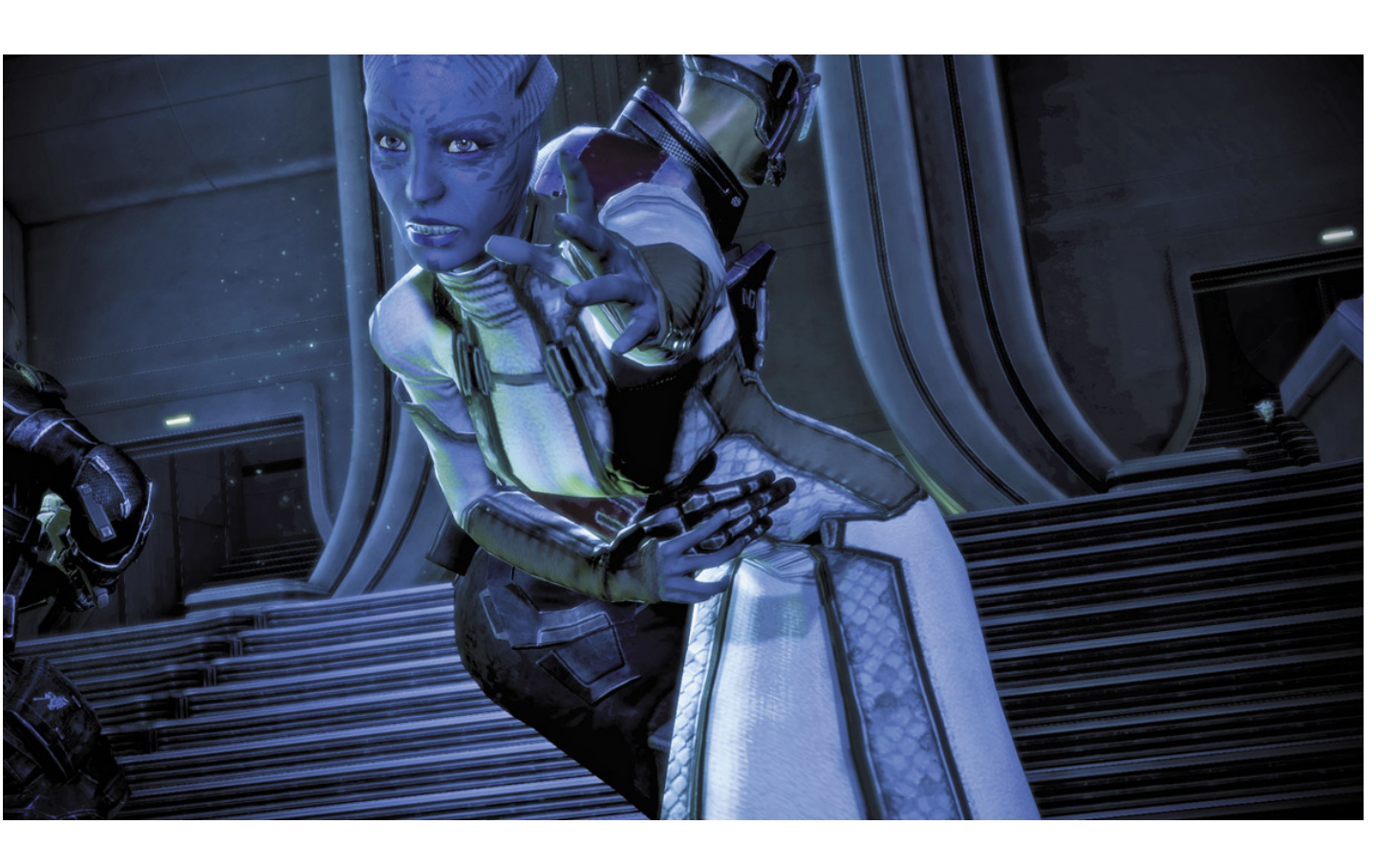
Husk
Health

Falere has found Rila, but the latter does not seem to be herself, attacking her sister. After Falere repels her, the scream of Banshees fills the room.

Two Banshees, supported by Husks, charge at your squad.

This can arguably be one of the hardest fights of the game, as the Banshees can close the distance rapidly and kill you in a single moment if you're careless.

Focus on burning them down, but do not discount the threat of the Husks, lest they pin you down long enough for a Banshee to get close to you.



After surviving the Banshee onslaught, Rila comes to her senses and urges you to flee with Falere.

Your team pulls a distraught Falere away from her sister to the elevator as more Banshees pour into the room.

The surviving Ardat-Yakshi does not take the death of her sister well, and through conversation, you can calm her down.

You're also given the option to execute her to finish what the commandos started, or you can show a measure of mercy.

NOTE

The final battle at the Great Hall, as well as the aftermath, all change dramatically if Samara is present.

She will attempt to kill herself in the wake of Rila's sacrifice.

You can stop this with a Paragon interrupt. Doing this will also disallow the option of executing Falere.

Whatever your choices, your obligation to asari high command is complete. The monastery has been purged.

Side Missions

Arrae: Ex-Cerberus Scientists

Commander Shepard is not the only ex-Cerberus employee angered by the organization's turn to brutality.

Shepard's old squadmate with Cerberus, Jacob Taylor, has helped a cadre of like-minded scientists led by Dr. Brynn Cole break free of the organization and go into hiding on the planet Gellix.

They have offered Alliance command their services in exchange for their safety. Unfortunately for these scientists, Cerberus is on to them and has sent forces to intercept them before you arrive.

NOTE

Jacob Taylor may be a familiar face to players who finished Mass Effect 2. He will be your key contact throughout this mission, assuming he survived the suicide mission against the Collectors. He is alive by default for players starting with Mass Effect 3.

MISSION BRIEFING

Availability: During "Priority: Perseus Veil"

Battlegrounds: The base on Gellix has enough firepower to keep Cerberus at bay but is falling, perhaps because it is being defended by civilians. The Illusive Man is playing for keeps here, intent on not letting a single scientist escape his grasp.

Be certain to explore the two noncombat areas thoroughly, as there are supplies and even an important quest item that you can pick up while you're here.

Your primary task is to get the rooftop AA guns online. Naturally, Cerberus is there in force to prevent that.

The battlefields here heavily encourage sniping, so consider scoped weapons for your loadout.

If you've managed to bring Ashley Williams back into the squad, she and Garrus make excellent choices for this mission, as both can wield a sniper rifle with deadly accuracy.

Give them the most powerful sniper rifles at your disposal, and between the two of them, very little in the distance will stay safe for long.

Consequence Overview: Saving these scientists is a huge intelligence coup against the Illusive Man.

Better yet, if you trust them enough, you can offer them a place on the teams building the Crucible, giving the project and your Galaxy at War efforts a needed shot in the arm.

NOTE

Jacob Taylor may be a familiar face to players who finished *Mass Effect 2* . He will be your key contact throughout this mission, assuming he survived the suicide mission against the Collectors.

However, he will not be available here if he did not survive the suicide mission against the Collectors.

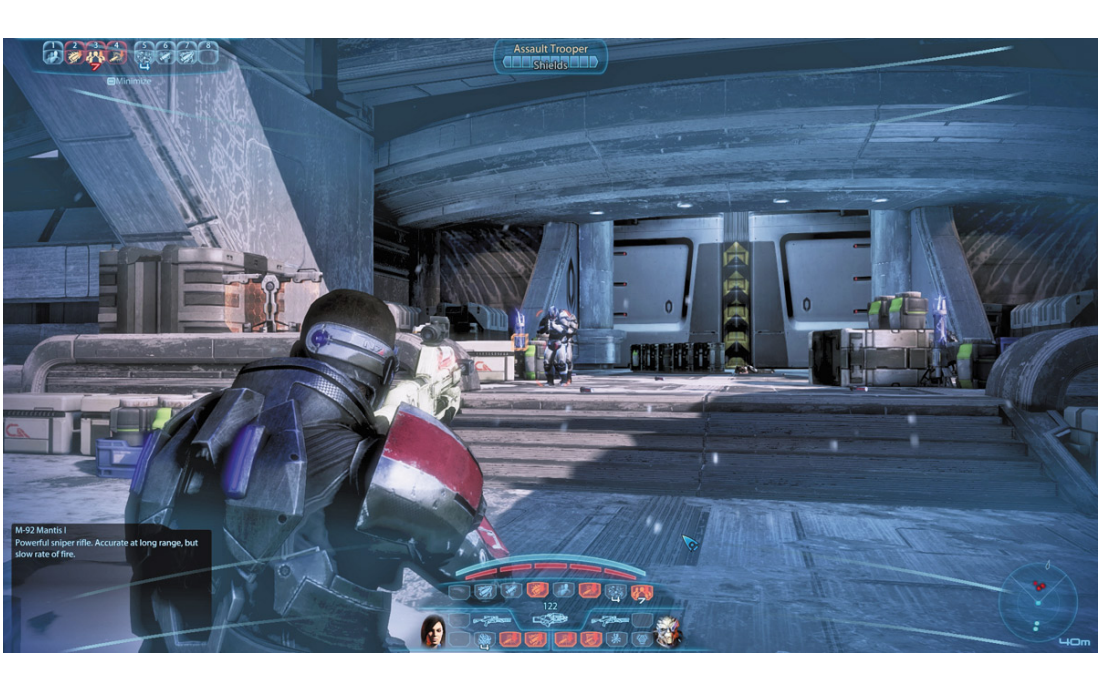
ITEMS REQUISITION RUNDOWN

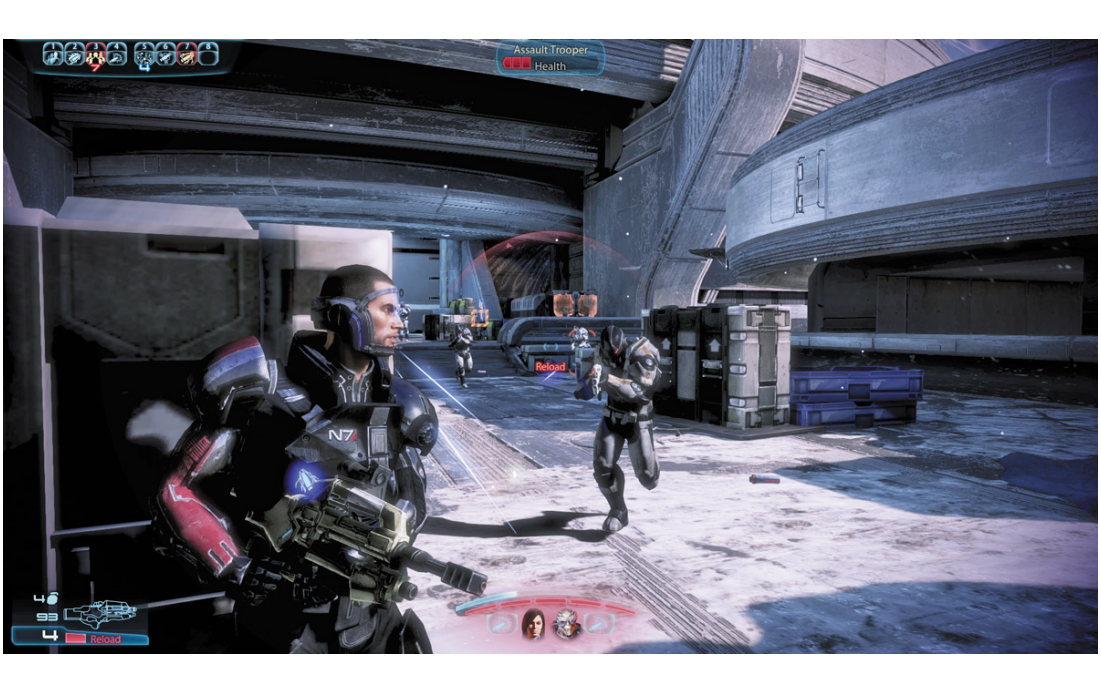
Assault Rifle Magazine Upgrade	Shotgun High-Caliber Barrel
Credits: 1,250; 2,500 (x3); 3,750	Shotgun Spare Ammo Mod
Kassa Fabrication Greaves	SMG High-Caliber Barrel
M-6 Carnifex Pistol	Sniper Rifle Piercing Mod
Medical Station (x2)	Turian Toxin Data
Med Kit (x3)	

BREAKING THE SIEGE

On the flight in, Lieutenant Cortez informs your squad that Cerberus is not only at the facility, but also that heavy reinforcements are expected to arrive within minutes.

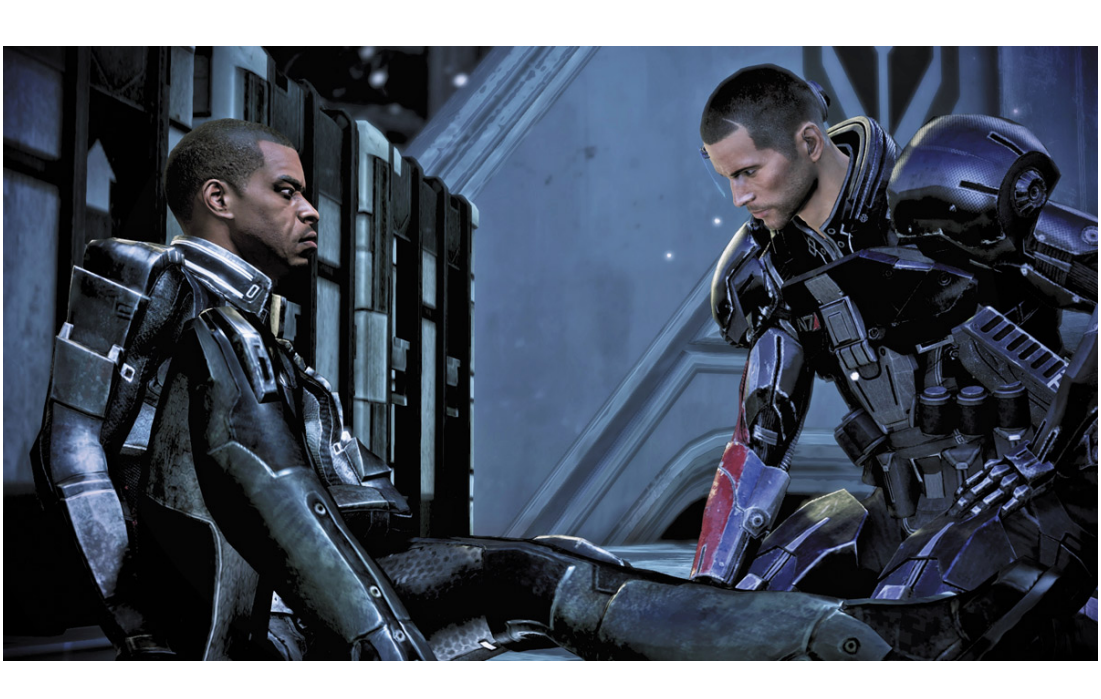
The situation on the ground is growing desperate for the scientists, and for Jacob Taylor.





The firefight at the facility's gates is made more complex by the fact that the Cerberus troops have a pair of shield pylons providing additional protection to them.

Take them out of the picture, then go to work on the troops. Alternatively, you can charge straight into the pylon's area of effect and use them to stand your ground while going toe-to-toe with Cerberus.



After beating back the attack, speak with Jacob to get the front gate open, where you meet with Dr. Brynn Cole. She informs you that her group split from Cerberus when it became obvious that they were being killed off after their usefulness to the organization had dried up.

Explosions begin to rock the facility, and Jacob informs you that the anti-aircraft guns on the roof are disabled and need to be back online if the evacuation is to proceed.

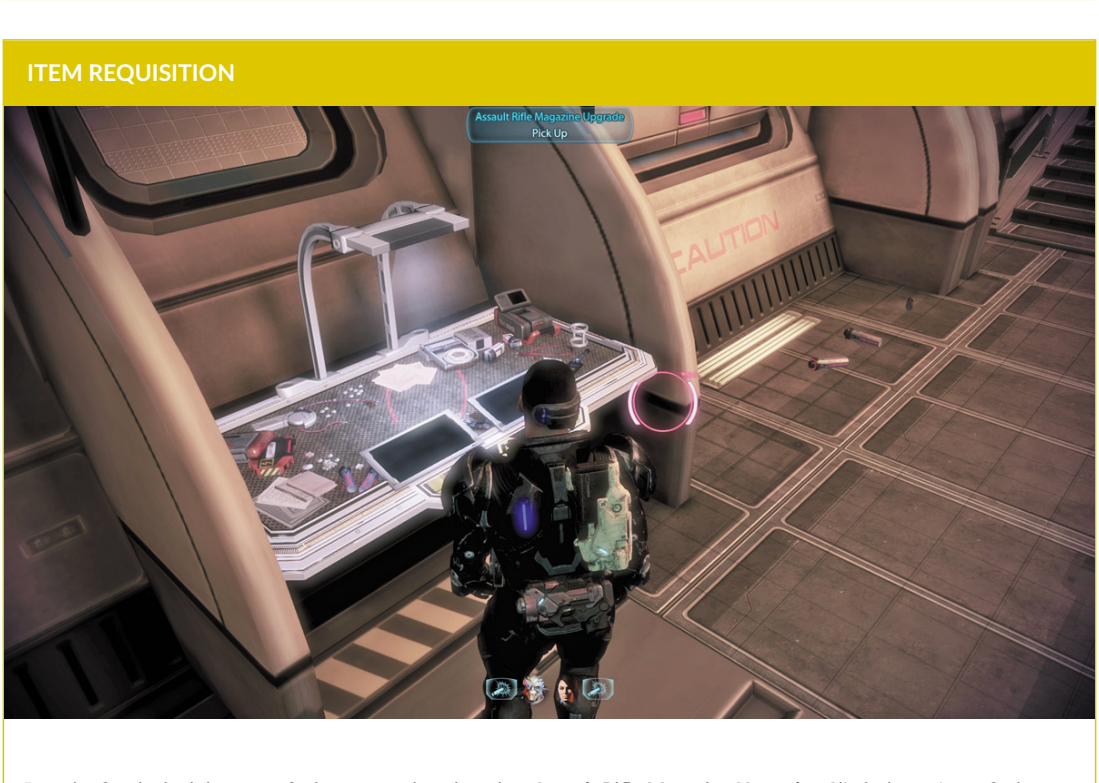
GATHERING

In the first area of the base, talk to the various scientists to gain additional Reputation points and information about what is going on. After climbing the stairs, check the nearby tables for a datapad worth 2,500 credits.

NOTE

Dr. Archer is another familiar face to Mass Effect 2 players who played through the DLC mission "Project Overlord." It seems he may have turned over a new leaf.

ITEM REQUISITION

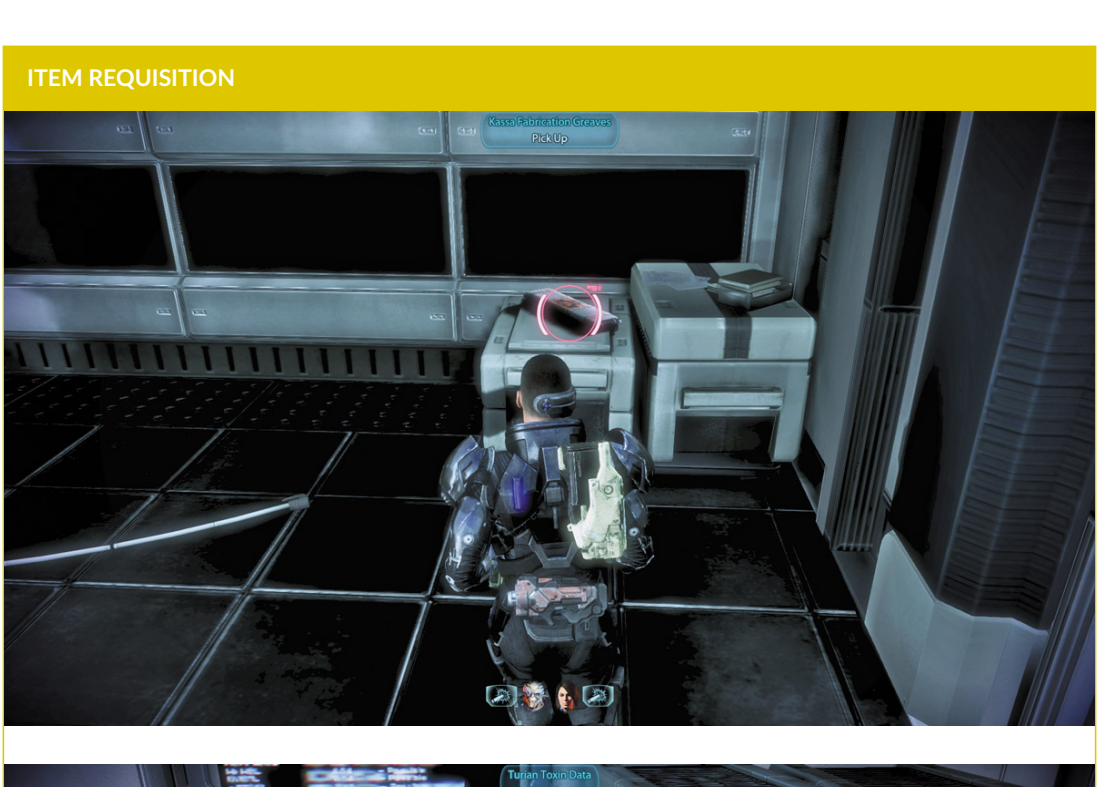


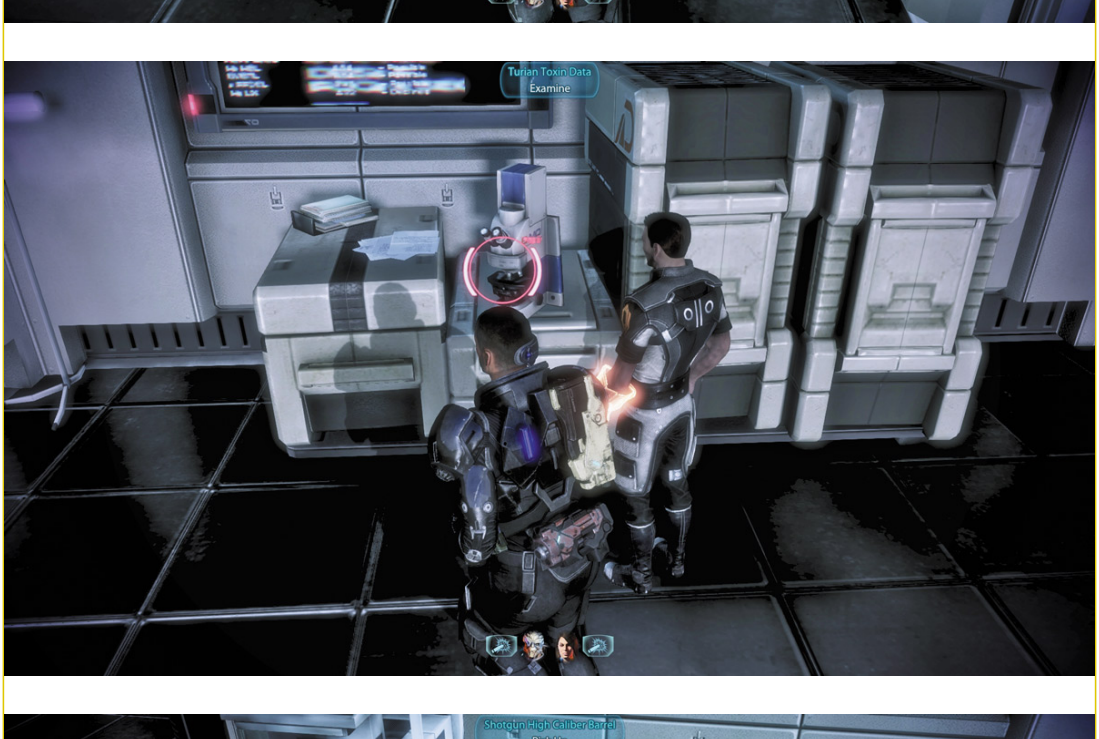
Past the first locked door, you find a weapon bench and an **Assault Rifle Magazine Upgrade** . Climb the stairs to find a Medical Station beyond the next door, then explore this upper area.

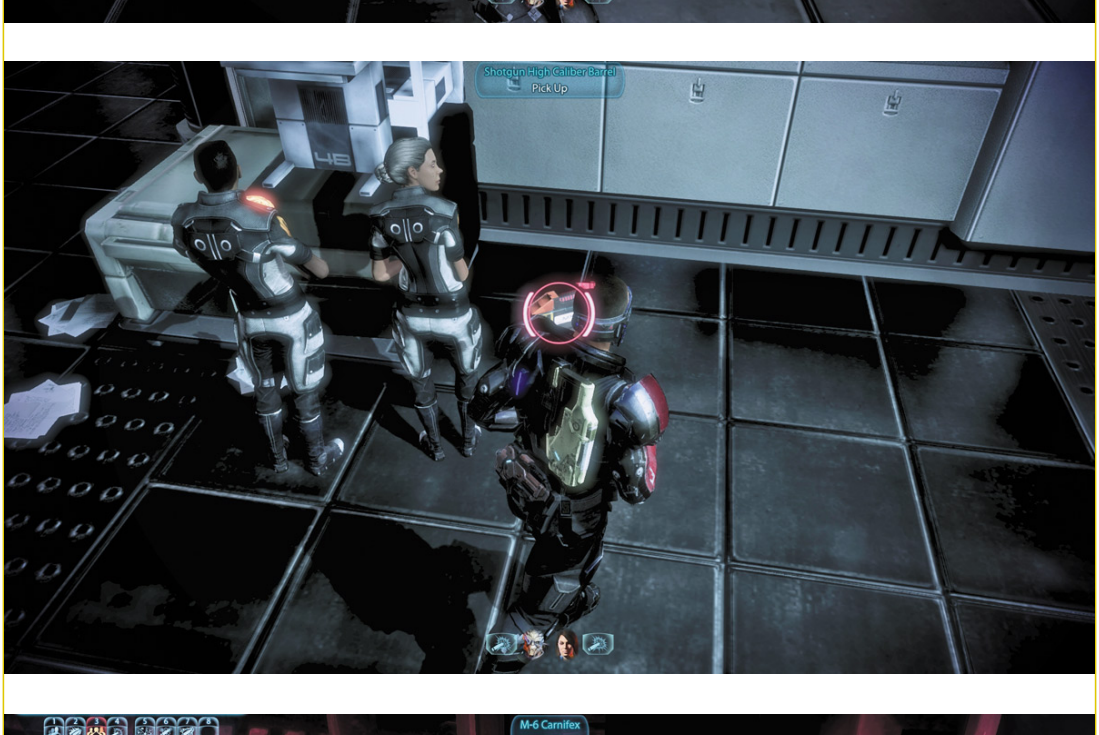
As you talk with Dr. Cole and Jacob, it becomes clear that you'll need to get to the roof to personally fix the guns. Before you leave, speak with both Dr. Cole and Jacob in the infirmary for extra information.

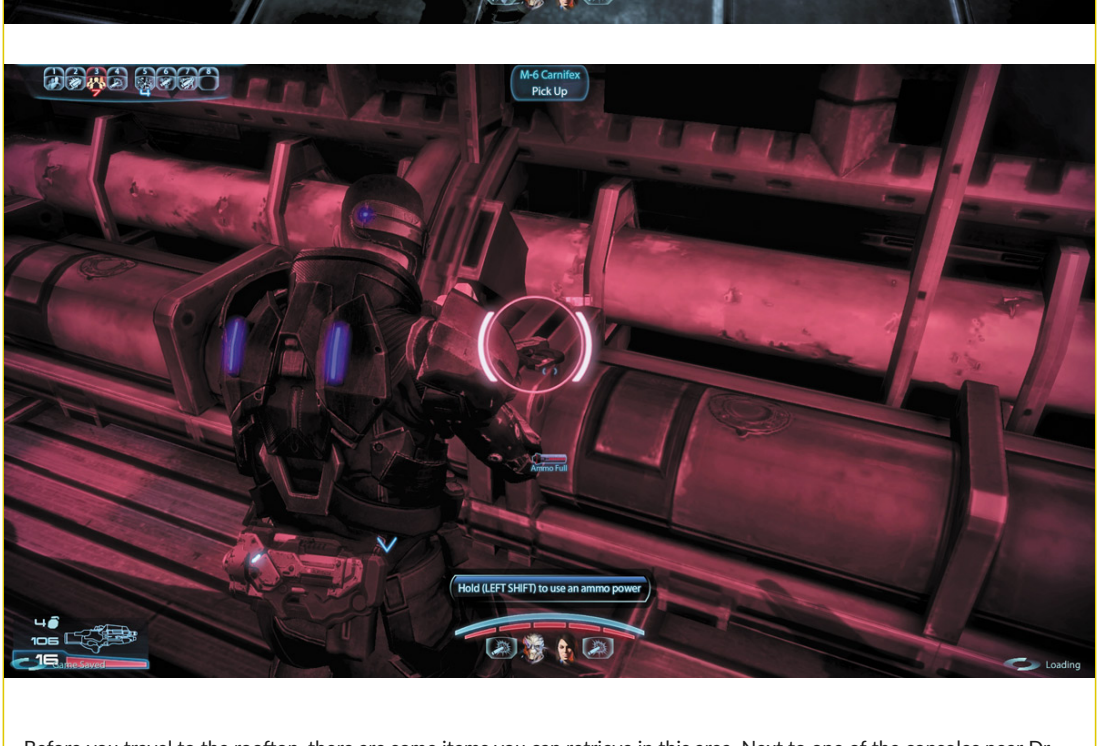
If players with a female Shepard romanced Jacob Taylor, you'll find that things did not end up working out between the two. He's moved on, with none other than Dr. Cole herself.

ITEM REQUISITION









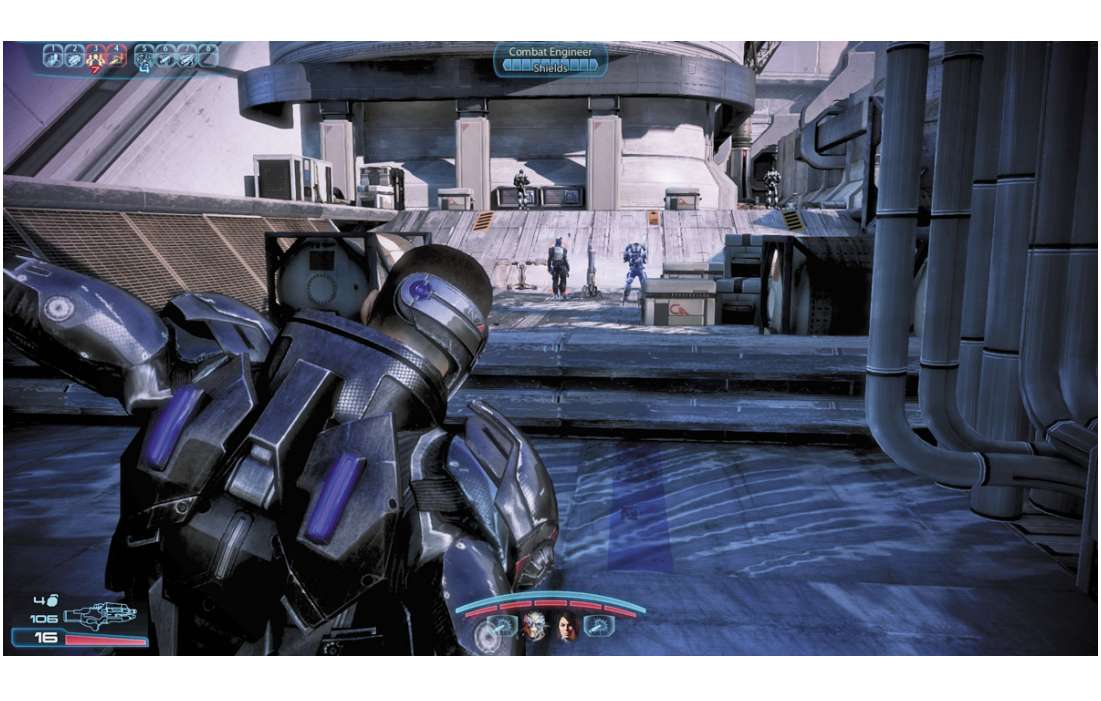
Before you travel to the rooftop, there are some items you can retrieve in this area. Next to one of the consoles near Dr. Cole is a datapad worth 2,500 credits.

In the infirmary with Jacob, there's another Medical Station if you need the Medi-Gel, and a datapad worth 1,250 credits. **Kassa Fabrication Greaves** can be found on a crate near the infirmary entrance.

Turian Toxin Data can be found in the larger section of the lab to help complete a Citadel quest (see HUB Missions Section). A **Shotgun High-Caliber Barrel** is located near the exit leading to the rooftop.

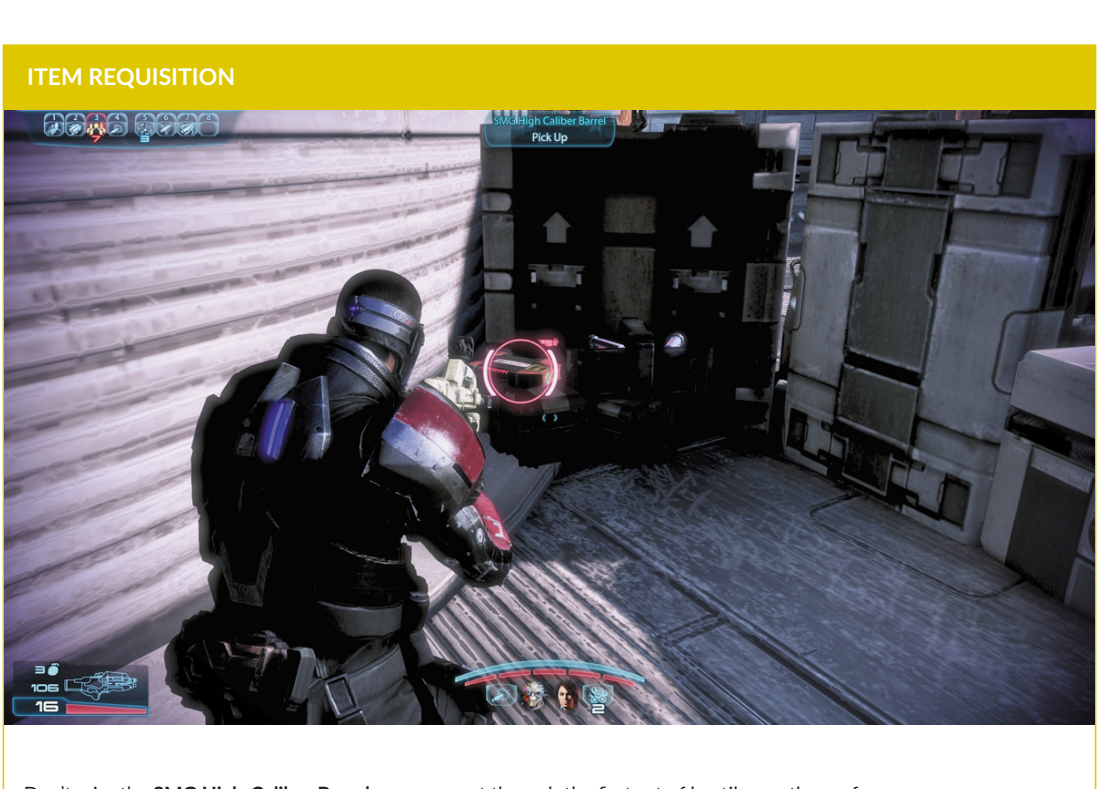
Once you climb the ladder to the next section, don't miss the **M-6 Carnifex pistol** .

THE ROOFTOP

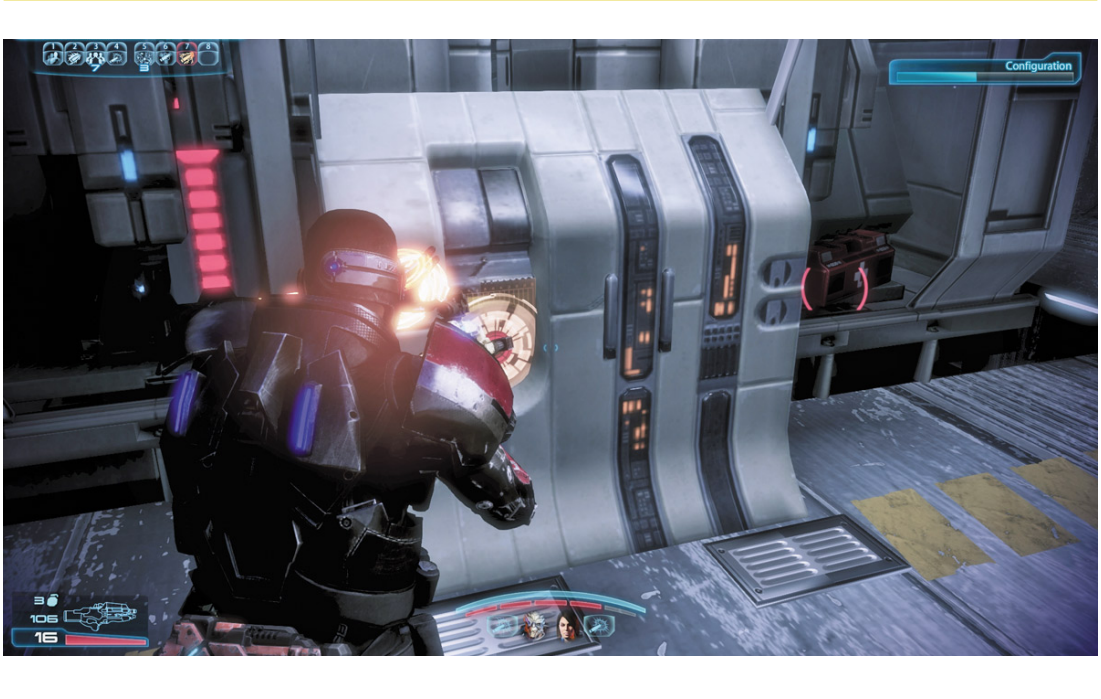


Your first set of enemies is already set up with a shield pylon, but they have their back turned to you. Take out the pylon and the nearby Combat Engineer first, then lay into the rest.

ITEM REQUISITION



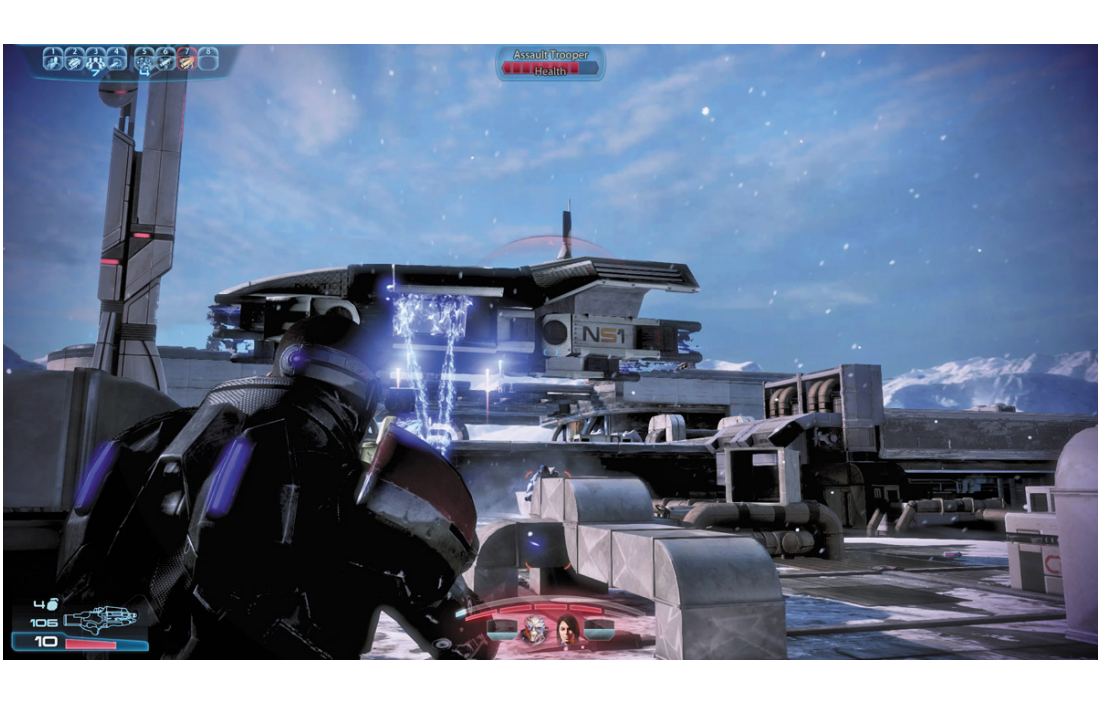
Don't miss the **SMG High-Caliber Barrel** once you cut through the first set of hostiles on the roof.



Your first real objective on the roof is to restore the satellite links to the base, and there's a Cerberus team waiting for you.

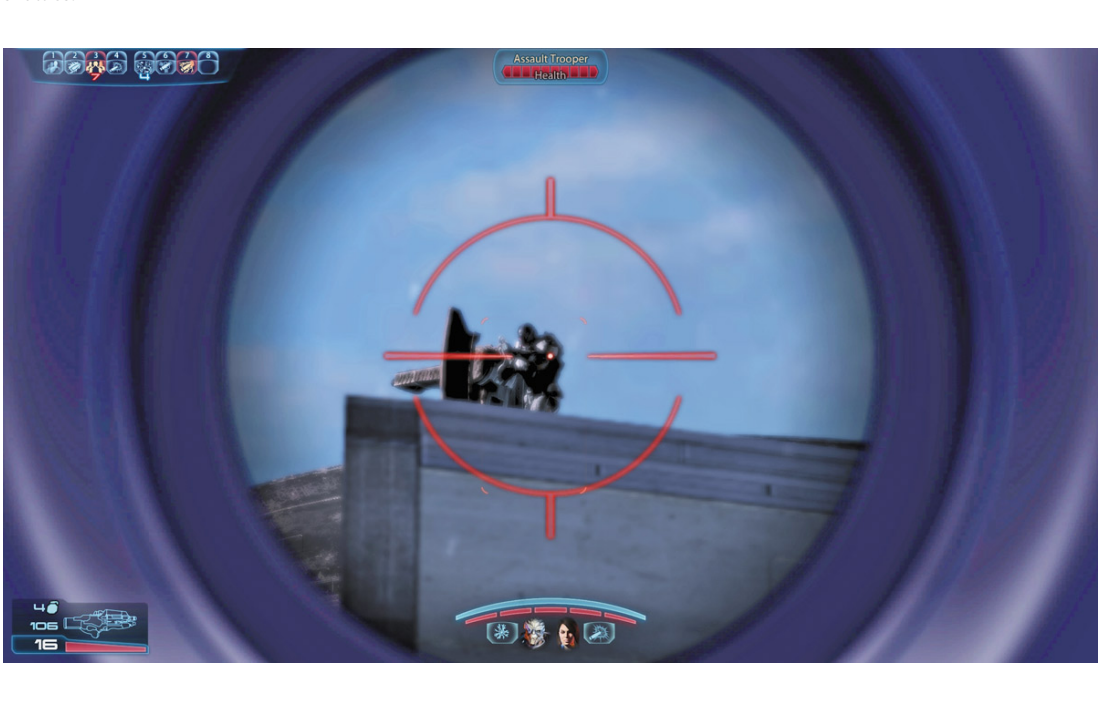
Watch out for the Combat Engineer to try and sneak a turret into place atop the stairs. After you eliminate this team, move to the satellite uplink and begin the repair.

A Med Kit and a datapad worth 2,500 credits are also close by.



The uplink is restored, but now you must climb farther up the rooftop to reach the AA guns to manually restore their functionality.

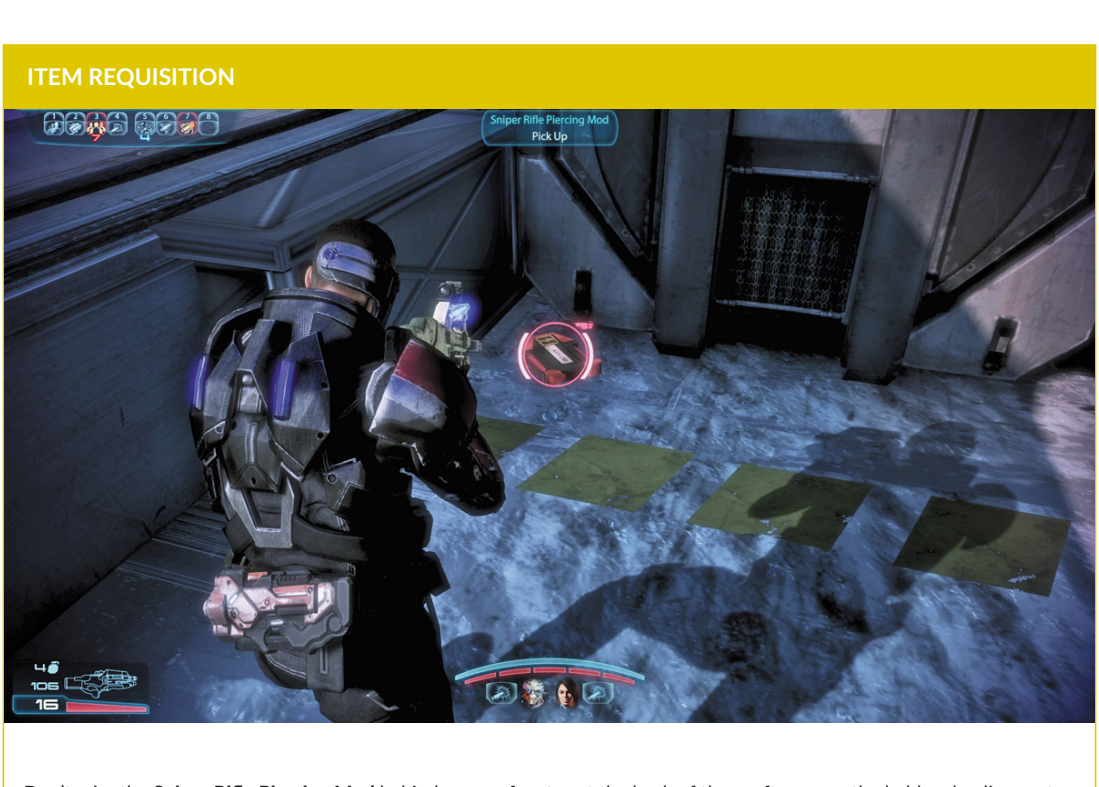
Cerberus begins dropping in more troops; one lands directly next to a shield pylon. Try to hit them hard before they exit the shuttles.



As you climb higher, an Assault Trooper takes up a mounted gun on an elevated section of the roof. The fire may not seem accurate at first, but do not tempt fate.

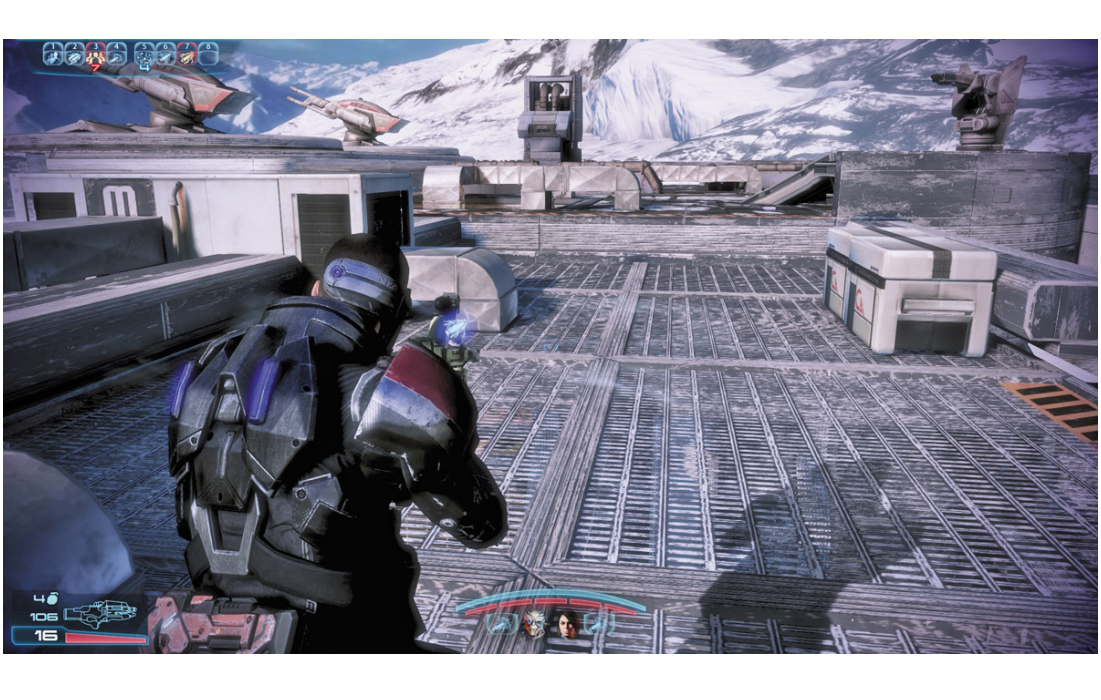
Once he draws a bead on you, the gun can shred your whole team in seconds. Another Med Kit is located on the final section of the roof before you climb up the gun towers.

ITEM REQUISITION



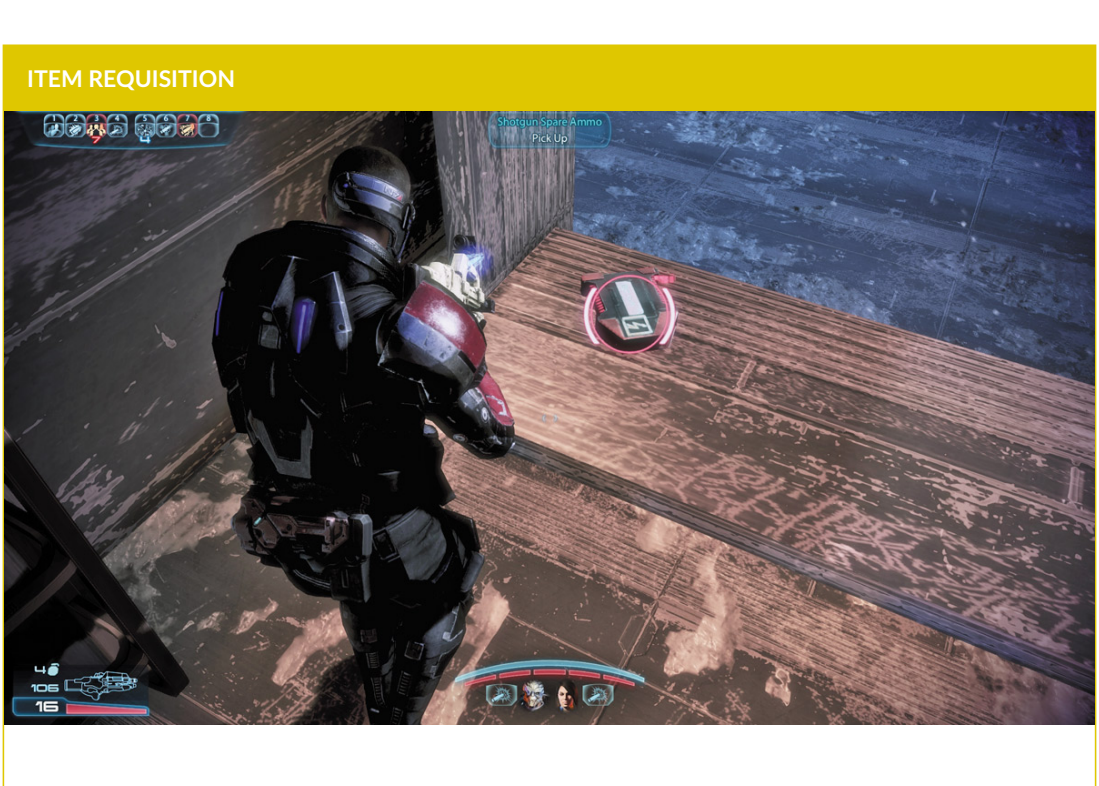
Don't miss the **Sniper Rifle Piercing Mod** behind a row of crates at the back of the rooftop, near the ladders leading up to the AA guns.

ACTIVATING THE AA DEFENSES

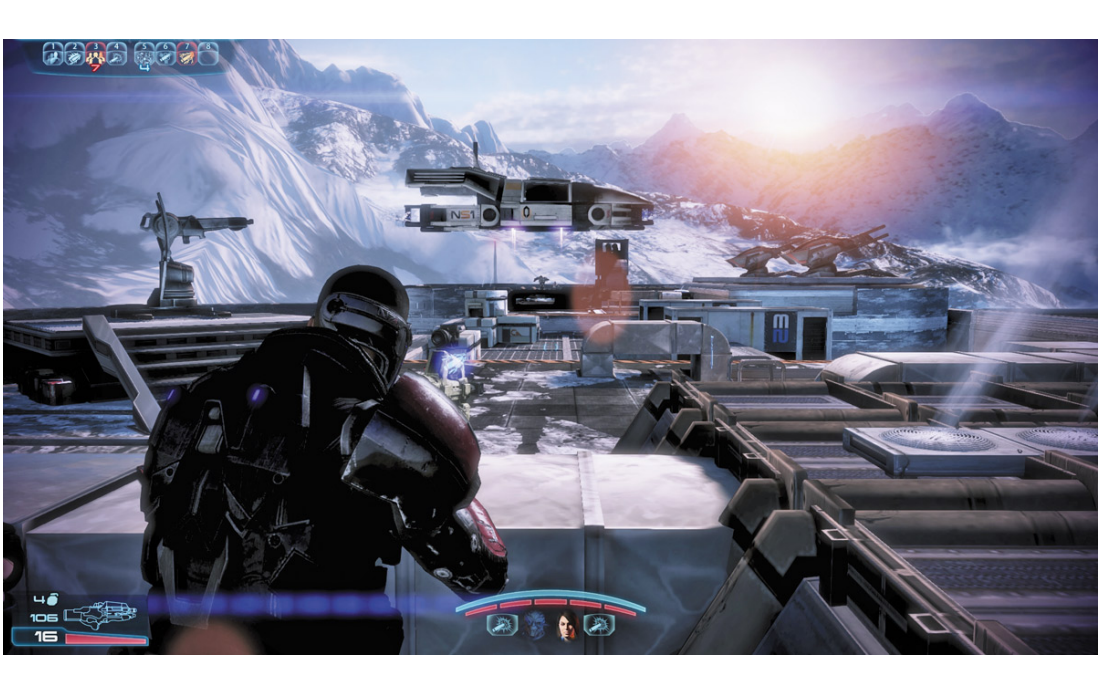


Climb up the undamaged ladder to the first AA gun and activate it. Cross the walkway connecting the two towers and head toward the second gun to restore it; then prepare for another fight.

ITEM REQUISITION



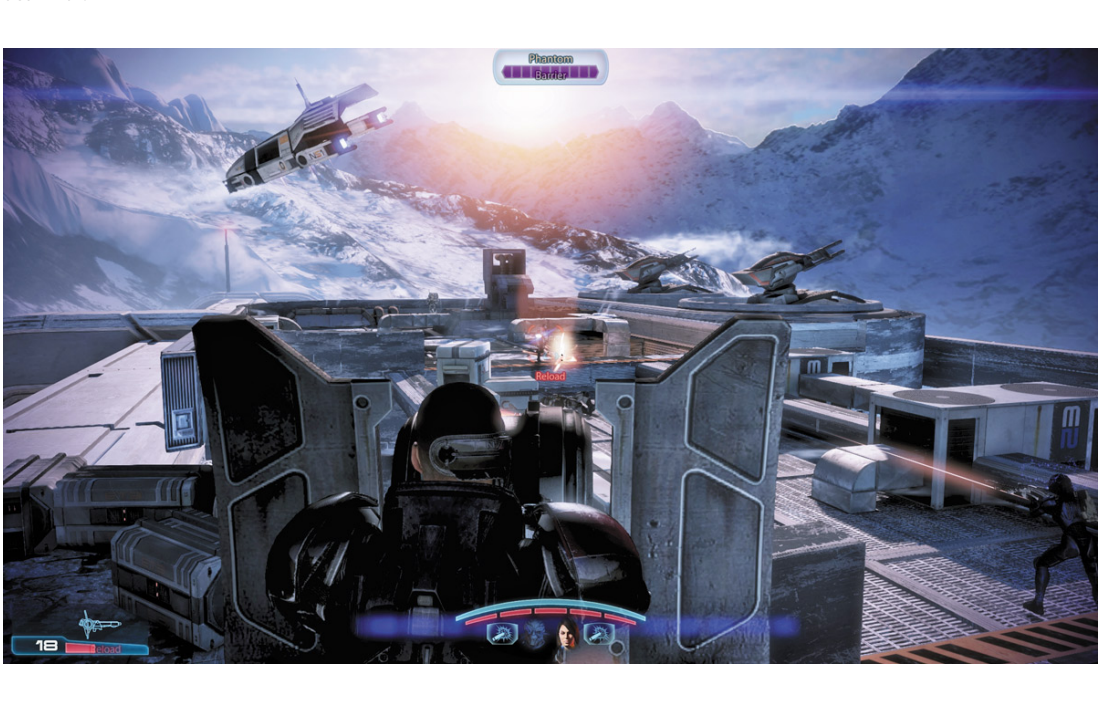
Before you leave this second tower, check out the small room you can access only from that rooftop to find a **Shotgun Spare Ammo** mod. Near the second gun, you find another Med Kit and a datapad worth 3,750 credits.



The second gun is seriously damaged, and one member of your squad will need to stay back to repair it while Cerberus sends in the cavalry to stop you.

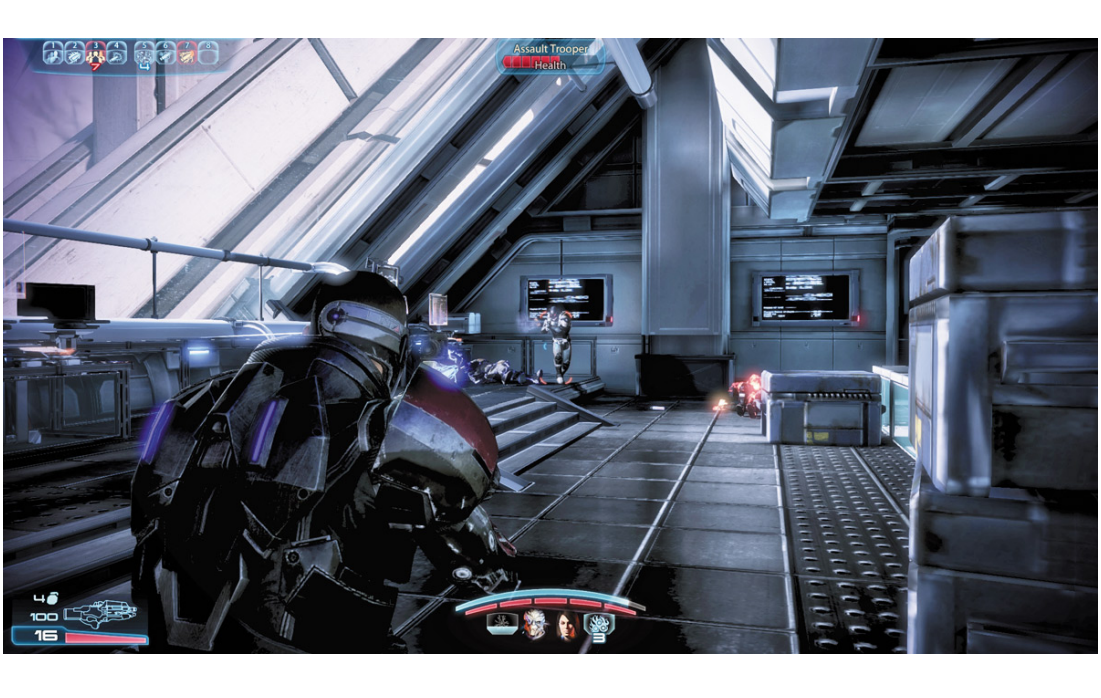
Fortunately, you now have access to the same mounted gun that was used on you minutes before, and you will want to put it to work.

Cerberus Phantoms are among the units deployed here, and their instant-kill sword technique is not something you want to deal with.



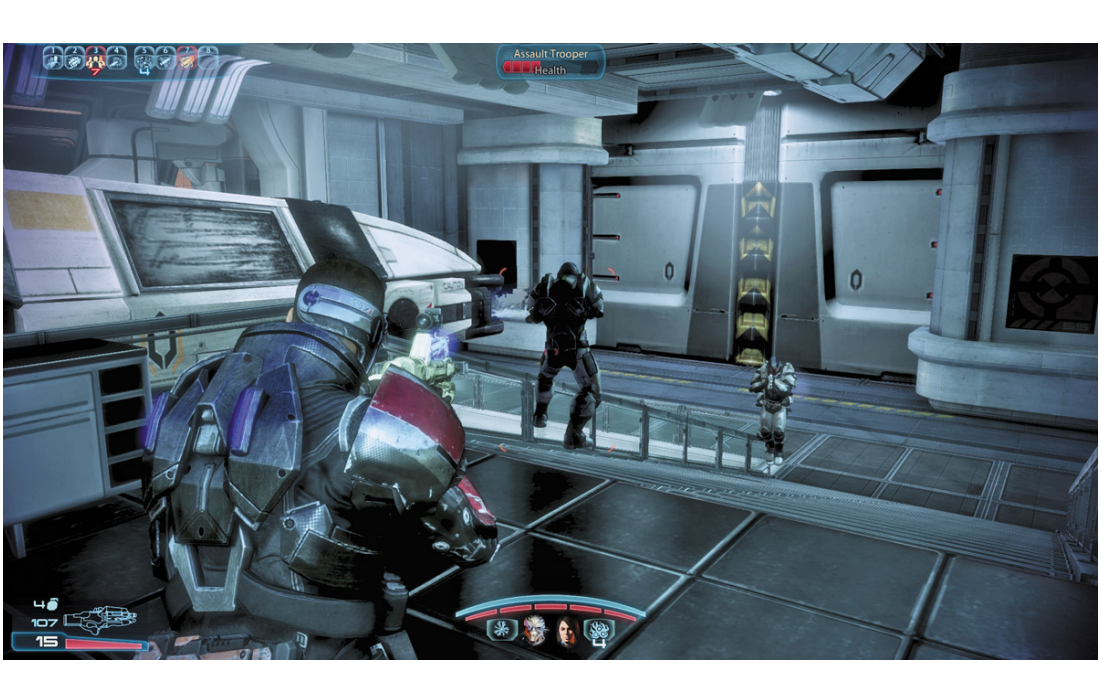
After several waves, the gun is repaired, and you need to go back and reactivate it. Once you do this, the mission automatically takes you back to the lab.

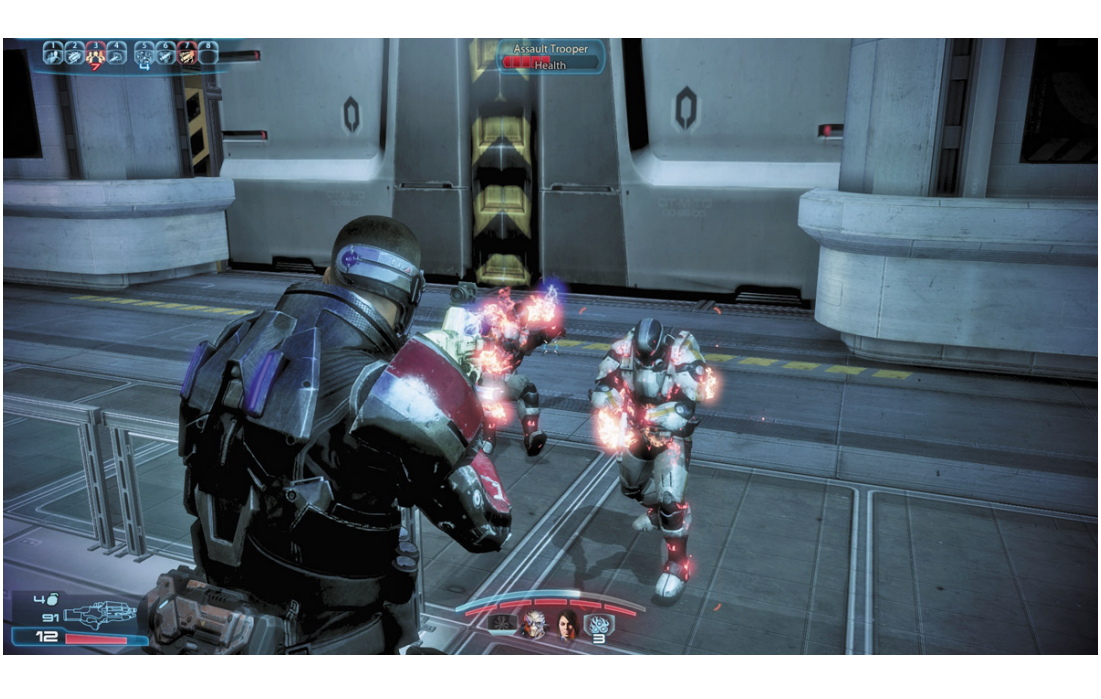
BREAKOUT



Once back in the lab, make a final sweep to ensure you've missed nothing, then activate the console pointed out by Dr. Cole to begin the evacuation.

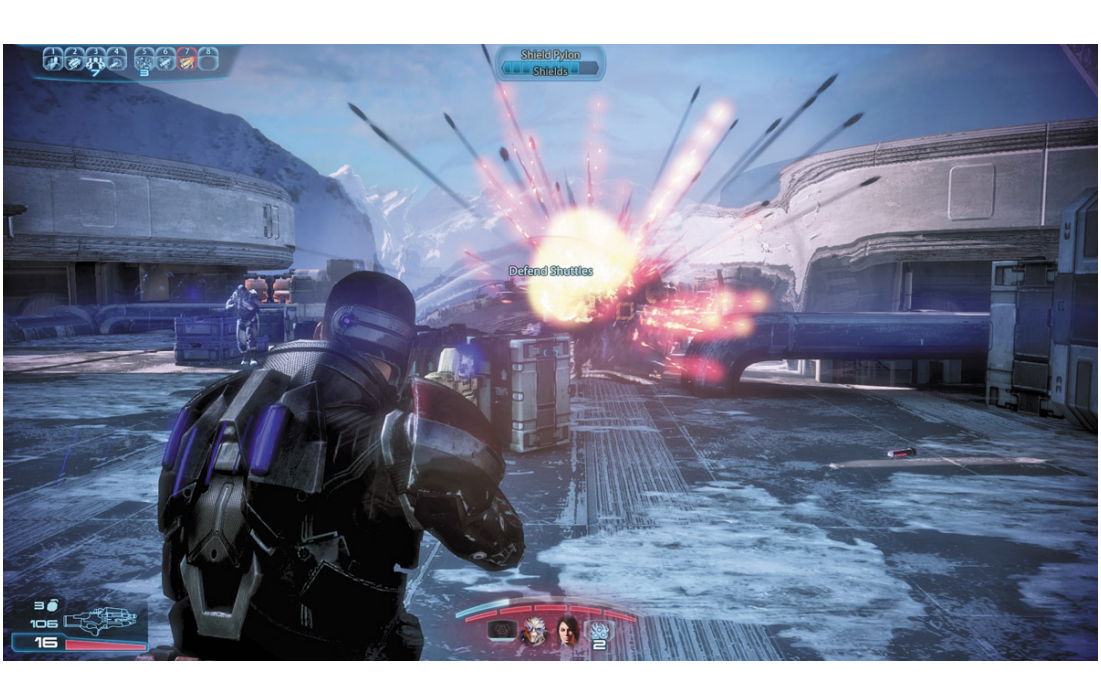
Cheers of elation from the scientists become cries of fear as Cerberus Assault Troops break through the glass of the base and begin a direct assault on the lab.

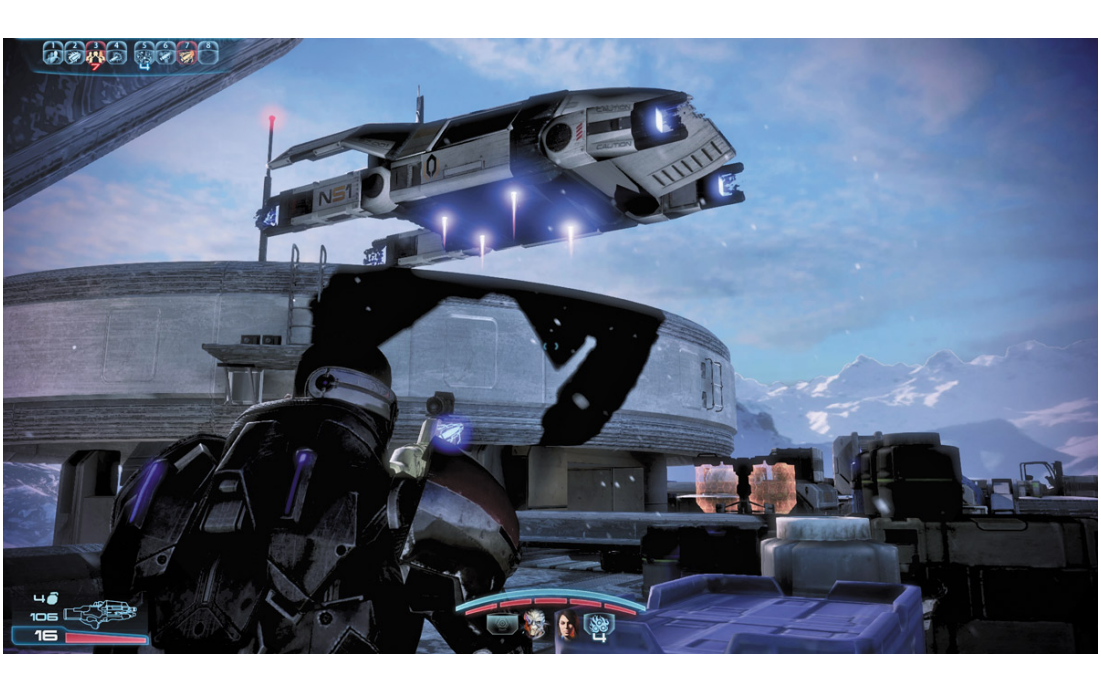


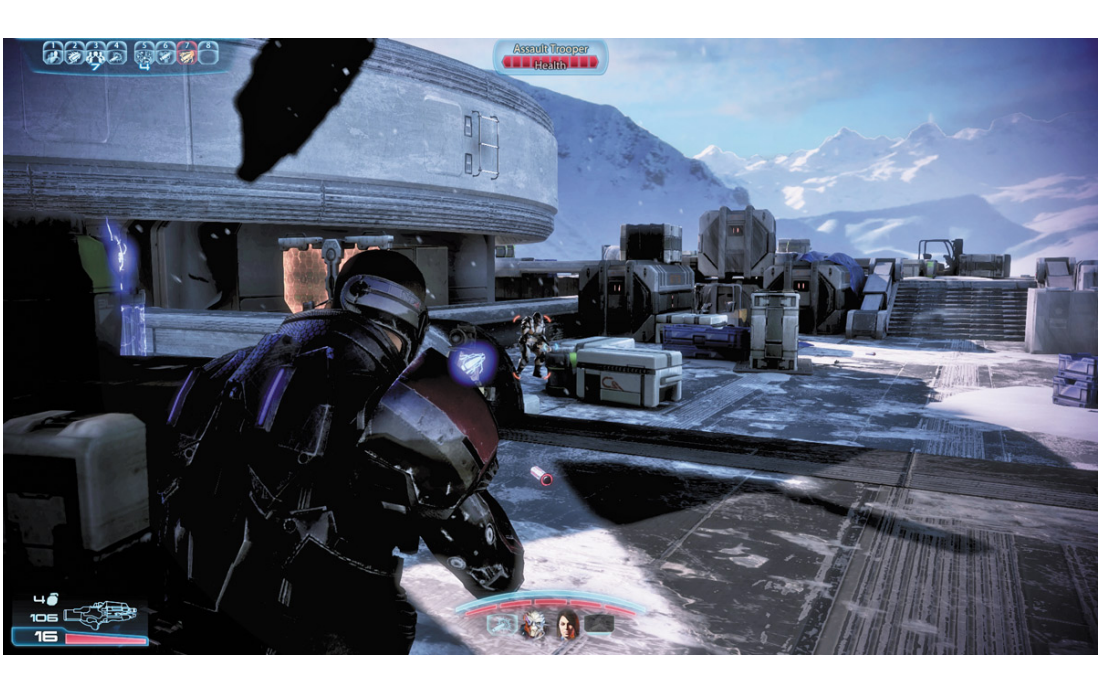


Once the lab is clear, get downstairs and help the scientists take out any Cerberus troops in the launch bay for the escape shuttles.

The bay doors will open, allowing your squad back outside to deal with the gathering Cerberus forces.



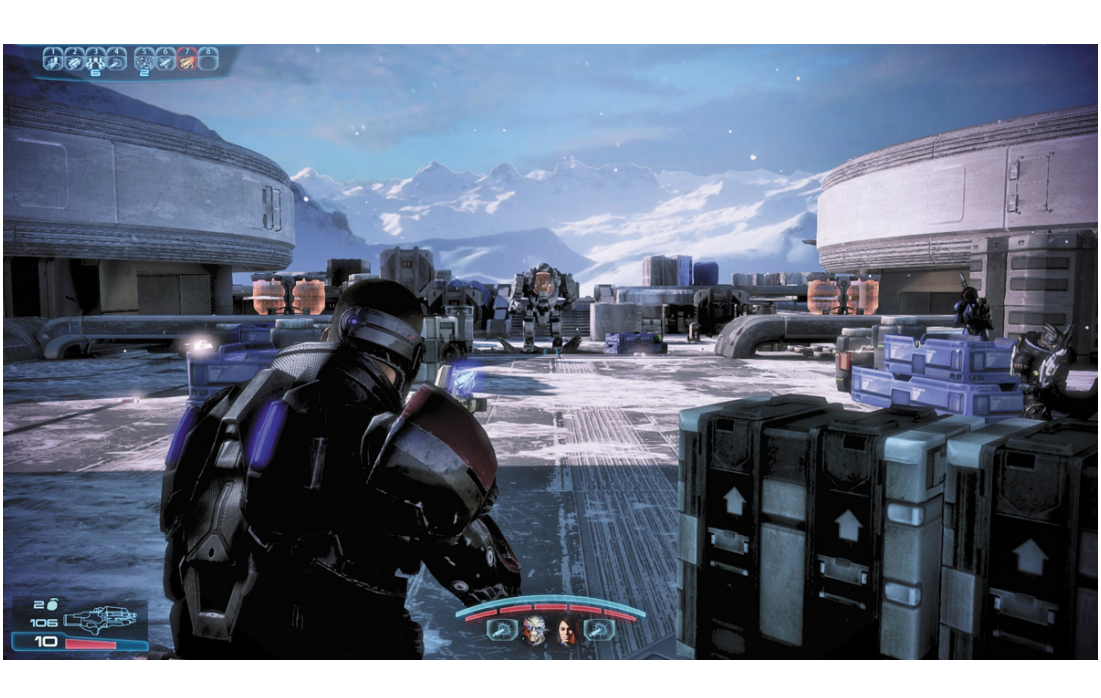


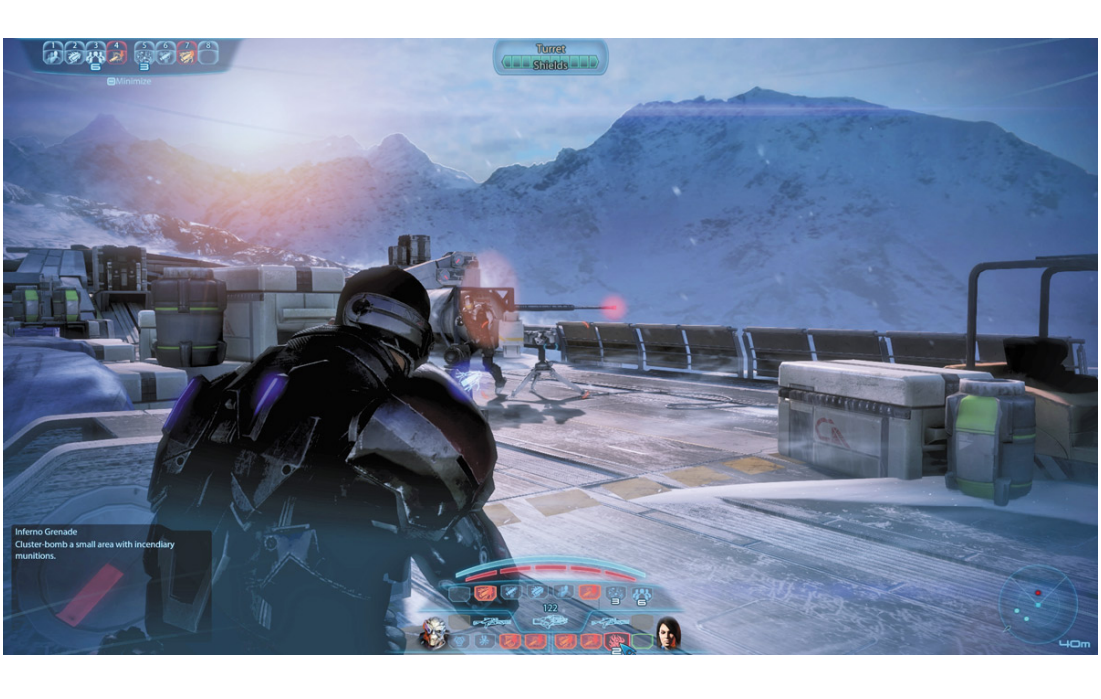


Expect very heavy resistance, with shuttles dropping off reinforcements directly in front of you and atop the two towers flanking the bridge that leads to the landing pad.

Try to use the shield pylons the enemy set up, but if you're unable to safely push forward, it's best to simply destroy them and deny them access to those bonuses.

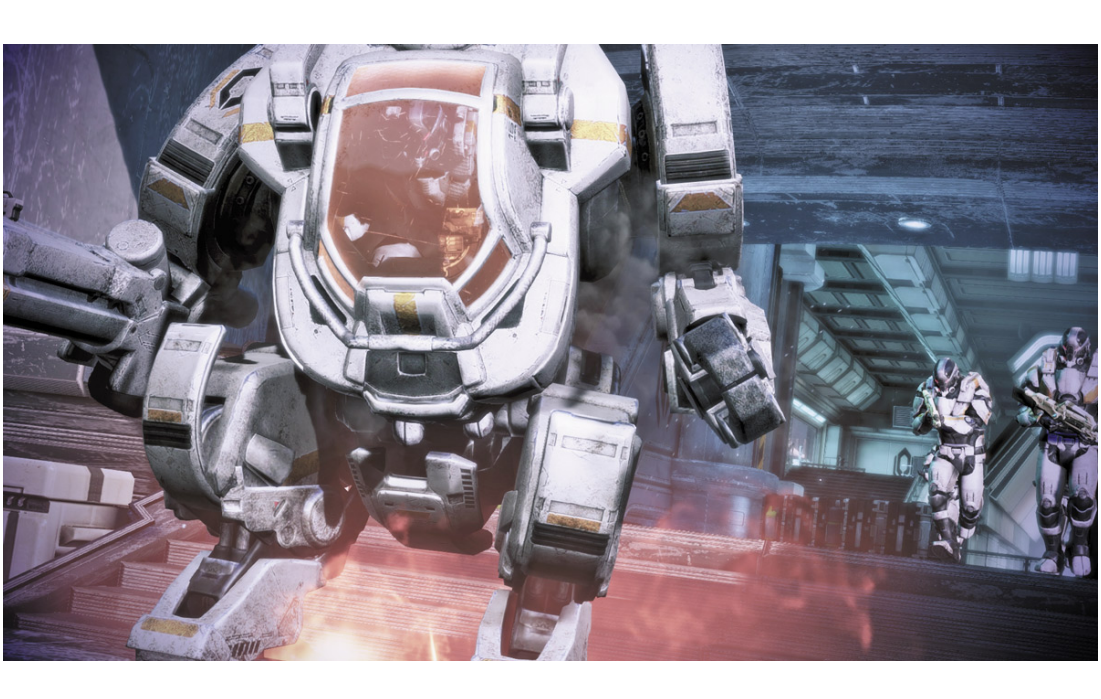
Watch for Phantoms trying to stealth their way up close to your position while you are preoccupied with other threats.

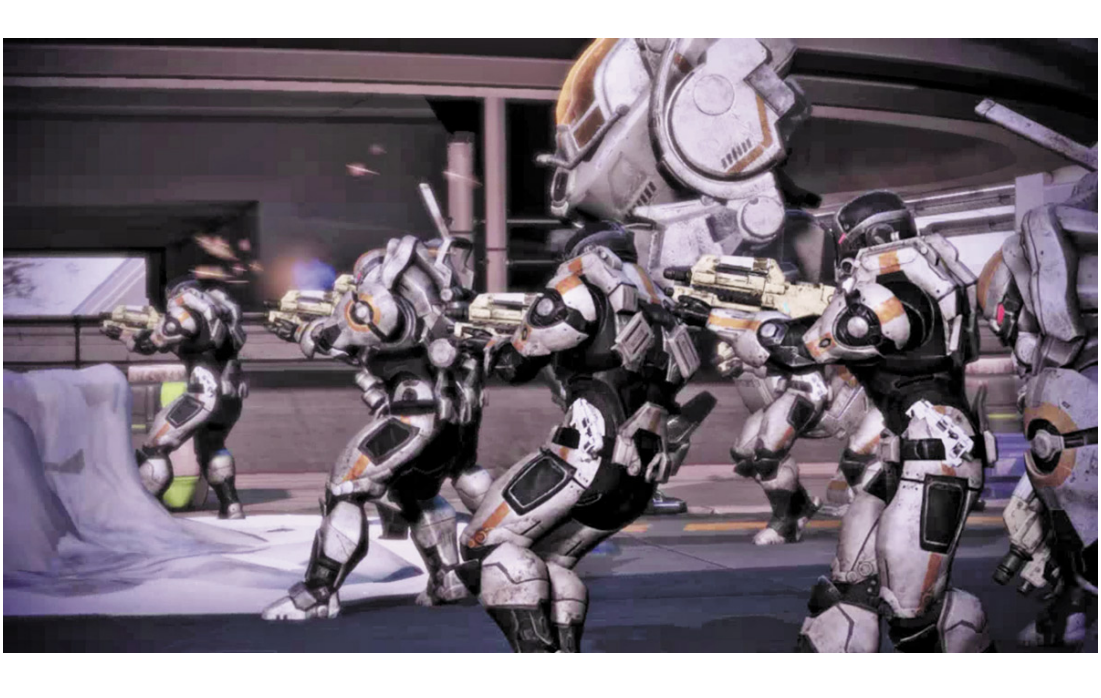




Capping off this massive assault is an Atlas, but you're still not completely out of the woods yet. Rush toward the landing pad, but watch your left flank!

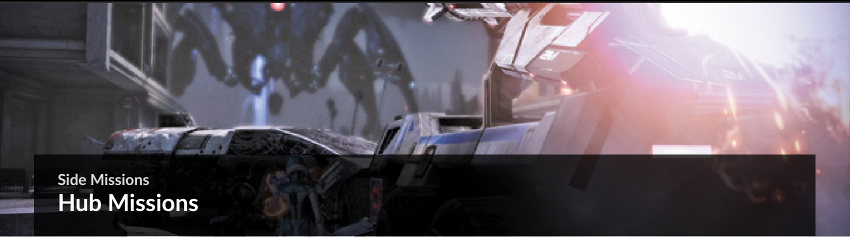
Occasionally, a Combat Engineer will try to ambush you with a turret that covers the entire run to the evac point.





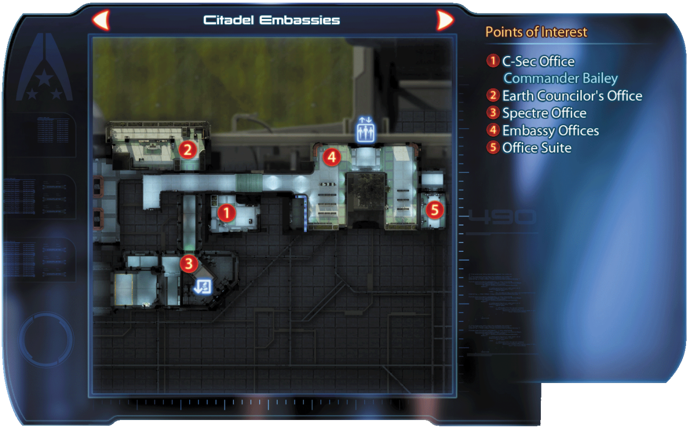
Once you eliminate all hostile forces, the mission is complete. Your squad narrowly escapes an army of Cerberus troops, with some help from Jacob and Dr. Cole.

If there were any doubts regarding the value Cerberus had for these scientists before, there shouldn't be any now.



Side Missions

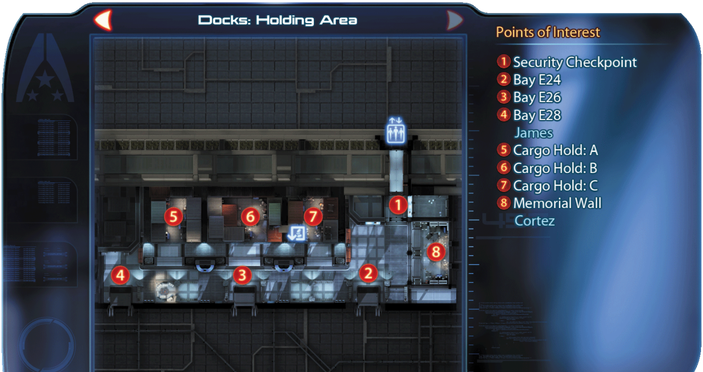
Hub Missions



Citadel Embassies

Points of Interest

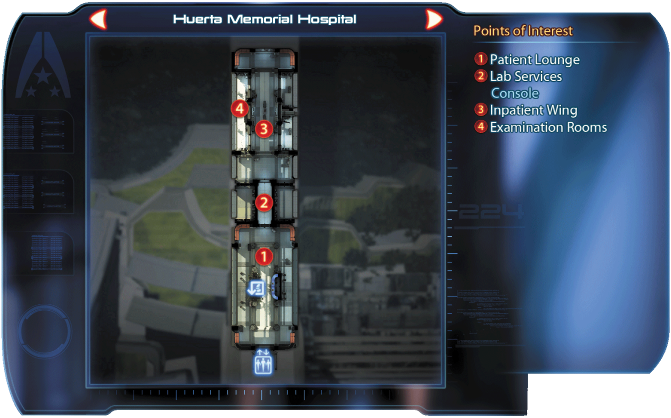
① C-Sec Office
  Commander Bailey
② Earth Councilor's Office
③ Spectre Office
④ Embassy Offices
⑤ Office Suite



Docks: Holding Area

Points of Interest

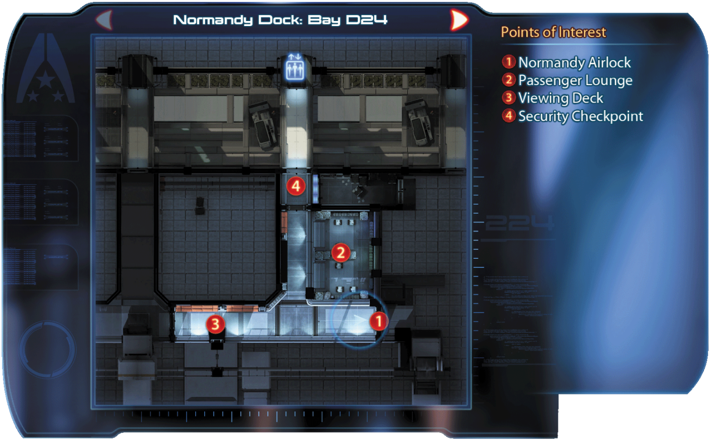
① Security Checkpoint
② Bay E24
③ Bay E26
④ Bay E28
  James
⑤ Cargo Hold: A
⑥ Cargo Hold: B
⑦ Cargo Hold: C
⑧ Memorial Wall
  Cortez



Huerta Memorial Hospital

Points of Interest

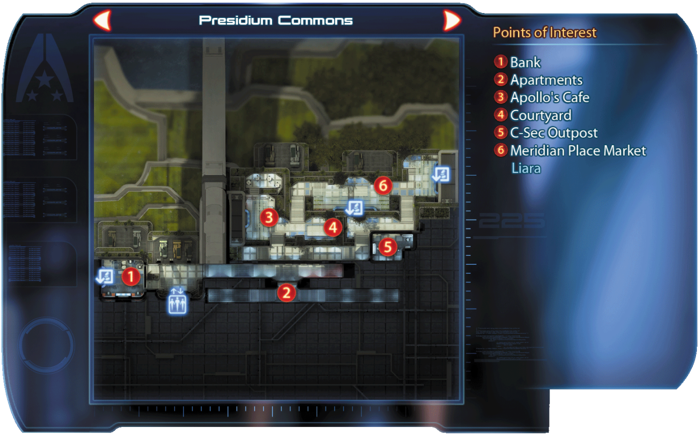
1. Patient Lounge
2. Lab Services Console
3. Inpatient Wing
4. Examination Rooms

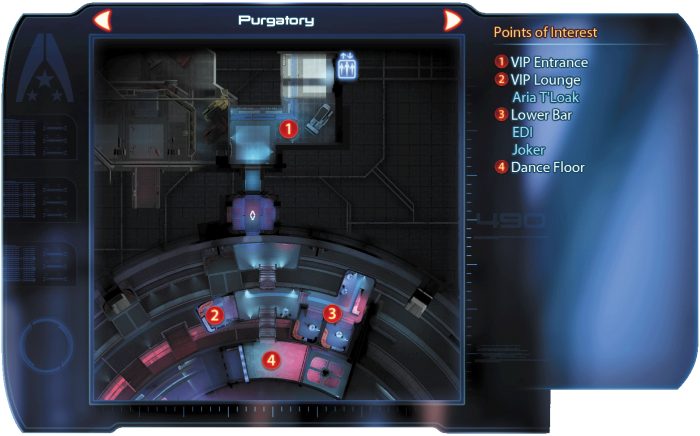


Normandy Dock: Bay D24

Points of Interest

1. Normandy Airlock
2. Passenger Lounge
3. Viewing Deck
4. Security Checkpoint





Throughout the Reaper War, you have the opportunity to help others in need with simple side missions that you take on by overhearing certain conversations.

Many of these lead to improvements to existing War Assets or may even result in you receiving new ones. Others are about providing closure to those who are seeking word regarding loved ones.

Almost every mission provides a boost to your overall Reputation, with some providing Paragon or Renegade points.

Many of these side missions are very profitable. Rare artifacts retrieved for people seeking them provide 15,000 credits for each item turned in, save for one mission that provides 20,000 credits.

This totals out to 185,000 credits earned without even firing a shot!

These missions become available at certain points in the story, but many of them may not be completed until later in the game, as more star systems open up for exploration.

As there are so many of these side assignments, it can be easy to forget about them, especially during the course of Priority missions or the larger side missions.

Use this chapter to learn each location you must explore to complete all hub missions. These are organized in the order in which you receive each of these missions.

Shrike Abyssal: Prothean Obelisk

Availability: Act 1, available as of “Priority: Palaven”

Location: Citadel Embassies

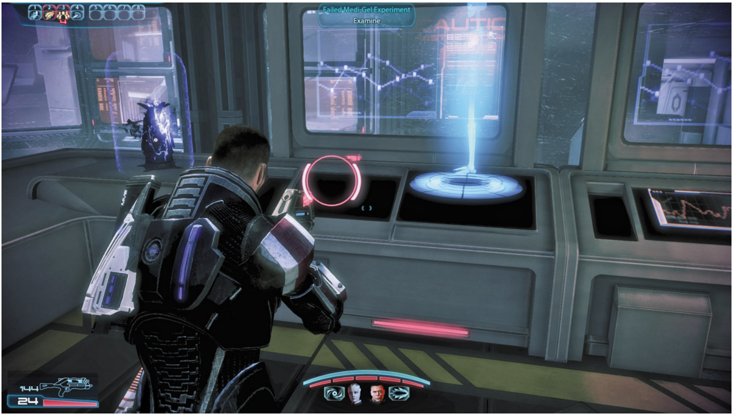
You overhear a volus ambassador talking about a Prothean obelisk that he wants to provide to the Alliance for work on the Crucible, saying it is currently located in the Shrike Abyssal.

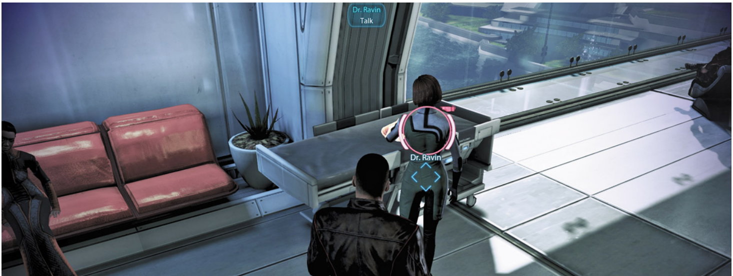
Travel to that cluster, enter the Urla Rast system, and scan the planet Talis Fia to locate the artifact. Inform the ambassador that you located the obelisk during your next visit to the Citadel. This artifact nets you 20000 credits.

Citadel: Alien Medi-Gel Formula

Availability: Act 1, during “N7: Cerberus Lab”

Location: Cerberus Lab and Huerta Memorial Hospital





Your first N7 mission in Sigurd's Cradle sends the team to a Cerberus lab. During your exploration of the small facility, look for a Failed Medi-Gel Experiment and collect it.

The purpose may not be immediately clear, but return to the Citadel and look for Dr. Ravin at Huerta Memorial Hospital. She could use these findings.

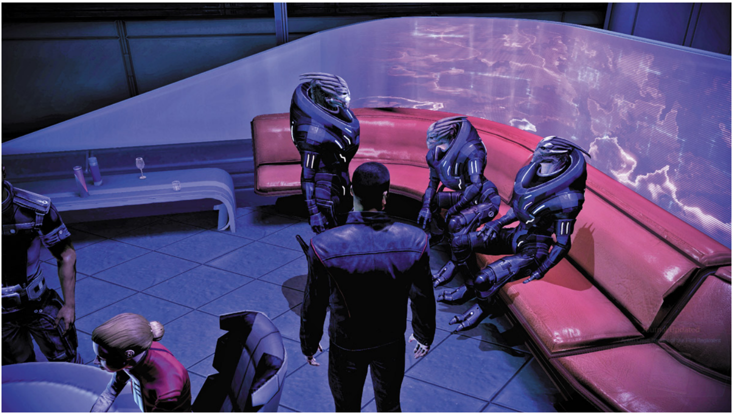
TIP

If you miss this item during the mission, you can obtain it from the Spectre terminal in the Citadel Embassies for a small fee.

Apien Crest: Banner of the First Regiment

Availability: Act 1, available as of "Priority: Sur'Kesh"

Location: The Citadel, Purgatory



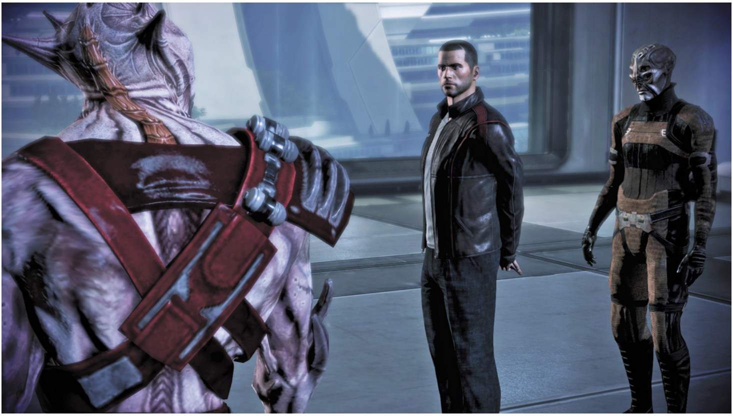
Visiting Purgatory, look for a group of turians gathered in one corner of the club. One will lament the loss of the banner of the First Regiment and will indicate that you can find it in the Apien Crest cluster, in the Castellus system.

Travel there in the Normandy and scan planet Digeris to locate the banner; then report back to the turians. This artifact is worth 15000 credits

Aria: Blood Pack

Availability: Act 1, available as of “Priority: Sur’Kesh”

Location: The Citadel, Purgatory



See Aria T’Loak in Purgatory after she sends an invitation. Her business proposal is to unite three merc groups under one banner: hers. Meet with Narl in the Presidium Commons apartments.

The batarian wants Shepard to pretend he’s been captured to gain the Blood Pack leader’s trust. Your response to this can give you Paragon or Renegade points.

Once the Blood Pack shows up, a sudden change of leadership leaves Aria with a willing and pliable leader to manipulate the mercs into fighting for her, and you.

Aria: Blue Suns

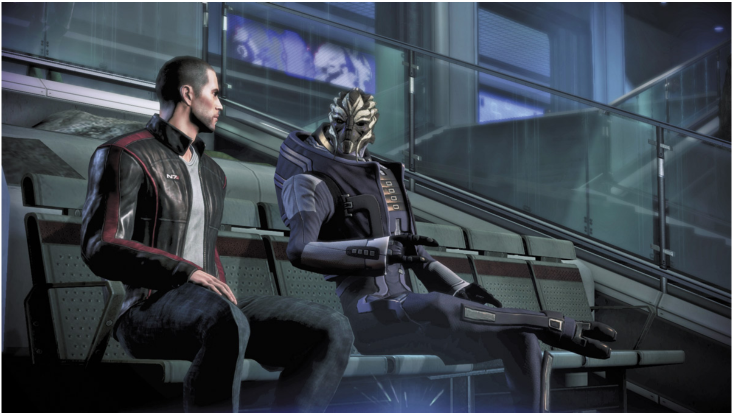
Availability: Act 1, available as of “Priority: Sur’Kesh”

Location: The Citadel, Purgatory

The Blue Suns will require a bit more work to coerce. See Darner Vosque near Cargo Hold A in the Docks: Holding Area.

According to him, a turian general by the name of Oraka is meddling with his pirate raids and will not throw in his support until he's dealt with. Your responses earn you reputation points.

Aria suggests she can handle the situation discreetly if Shepard can't. Go see Oraka in the Presidium Commons.



Oraka is not willing to give up on harassing the Blue Suns, as they are attacking Citadel weapon shipments.

You're given a choice to call in the hit on him for Renegade points, or find the means for securing weapons through a black market arms dealer.

Within the Commons, a salarian clerk near Aeghor Munitions named Kannik is your weapons dealer. His “good” merchandise isn’t open to credits, but rare artifacts are acceptable.

Travel to the Kite’s Nest cluster, and go to the planet Vana of the Vular system. Scan the world for the artifacts, then report back to Kannik. Kannik will offer his goods to Oraka.

Go back to Oraka with the good news, and he will lay off the Blue Suns, gaining Aria another army.

Aria: Eclipse

Availability: Act 1, available as of “Priority: Sur’Kesh”

Location: The Citadel, Purgatory

Commander Bailey of C-Sec has been fighting the release of Eclipse leader Jona Sedaris, and Aria wants you to convince him to allow it.

Meet with him in the Citadel Embassies, and the ensuing conversation can earn you Paragon or Renegade points. He will direct you to the C-Sec office in the Presidium Commons to give you a chance to speak with her.

Sedaris threatens extreme retribution on all of Eclipse's enemies and tries to badger you into allowing her release. You can invoke Spectre authority over Bailey and allow for her release, or you can find another solution.

During your chat with Sedaris, she mentions her lackey, Seyn, being too weak-willed to betray her and take the organization for himself.

Find the salarian in the Docks: Holding Area, near where you met Darner Vosque. Present him with the idea of taking Eclipse for himself, either by letting her rot in jail or killing her after release.

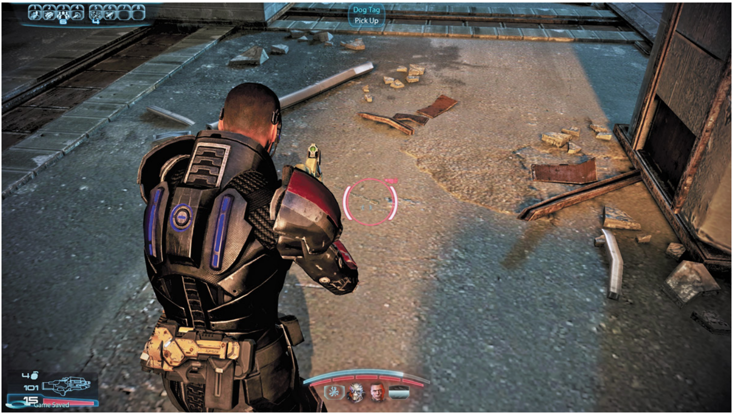
After brief consideration, he decides that following Aria would be a step up from Jona Sedaris. With this, all three major merc organizations of the galaxy are Aria's to command and become a powerful War Asset for the cause.

Benning: Evidence

Availability: Act 1, available as of “Priority: Sur’Kesh”

Location: The Citadel Embassies

Ambassador Dominic Osoba is seeking information on the whereabouts of his son, an Alliance soldier who did not return from his mission to the planet Benning. Other soldiers who knew him refuse to give a straight answer.



During the N7 Cerberus Abduction mission that appears later in the game, you are sent to Benning to deal with the Cerberus presence there.

Check carefully in the area you are first directed to; you will find the Dog Tags belonging to your ambassador’s son, but little else. Bring back the sad news as soon as possible.

NOTE

If you miss this item during the mission, you can obtain it from the Spectre terminal for a small fee.

Citadel: Barla Von

Availability: Act 1, available as of “Priority: Sur’Kesh”

Location: Presidium Commons

Find Liara near the cafe in the Commons. After a short conversation, she will direct you to a volus named Barla Von over at the bank.

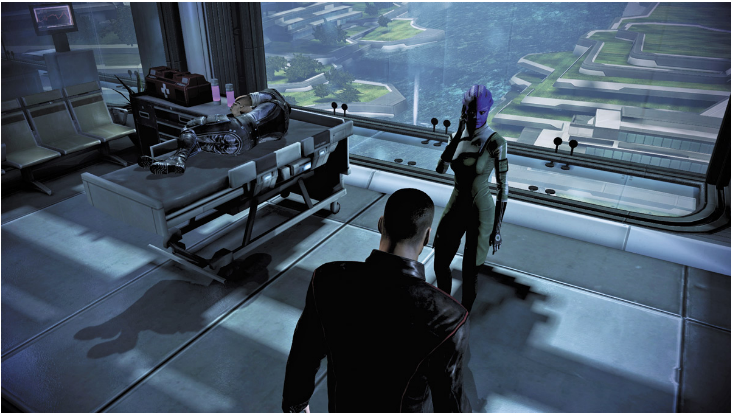
He knows of a mercenary outfit stranded in enemy territory, offering their services and monetary reward for rescuing them. Once you have access to the Krogan DMZ, travel there and enter the Dranek system.

Scan the planet Rothla to recover the mercs. Return to Von to finish the mission.

Citadel: Biotic Amp Interfaces

Availability: Act 1, available as of “Priority: Sur’Kesh”

Location: Huerta Memorial Hospital

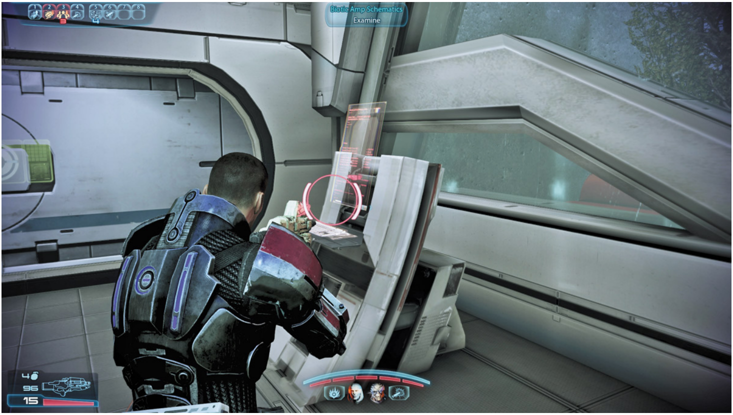


An asari at Huerta Memorial is trying to contact Grissom Academy for information on biotic amps but is unable to get through.

Specialist Traynor aboard the Normandy will eventually pass along information that necessitates a visit to the academy.

After the fighting that ensues and you're exiting the facility, keep an eye open for a computer console with Biotic Amp Schematics. Report back to the asari.

Make sure to report back to her before completing the Genophage Campaign, as she leaves afterward, making it impossible to complete the mission.



NOTE

If you miss this item during the mission, you can obtain it from the Spectre terminal for a small fee.

Citadel: Hanar Diplomats

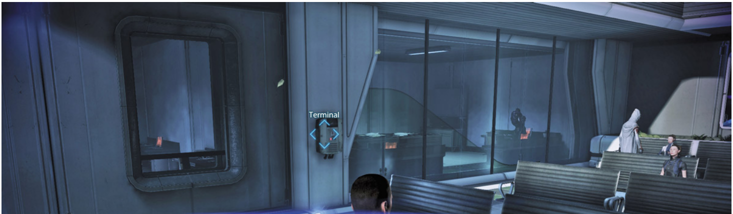
Availability: Act 1, available as of “Priority: Sur’Kesh”

Location: Citadel Embassies

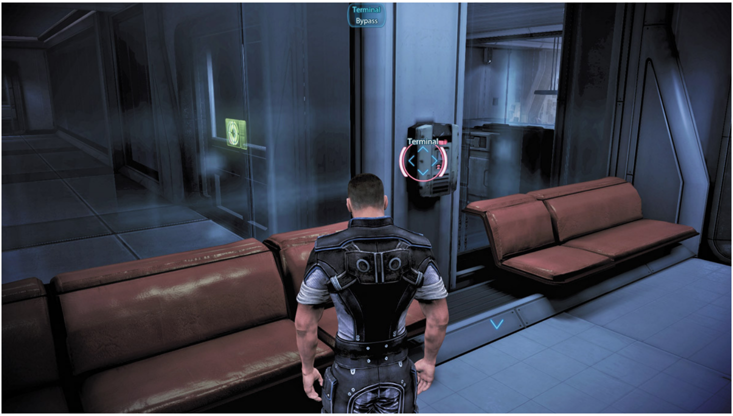
Jondum Bau, a salarian Spectre, e-mails Shepard regarding a potential issue on the Citadel regarding hanar diplomats, one of whom may be indoctrinated by the Reapers.

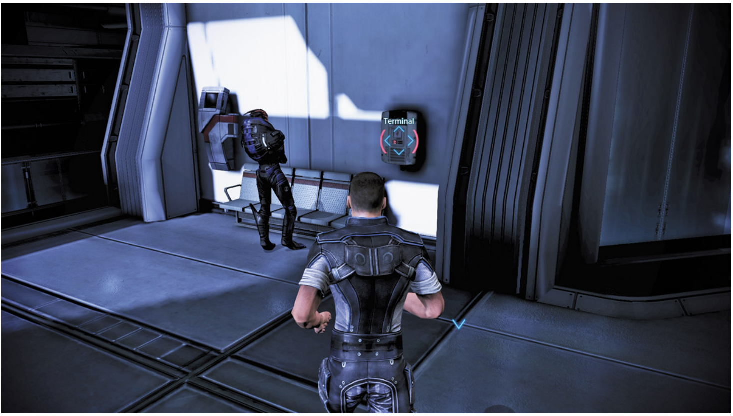
Meet with him near Commander Bailey’s office for a full update on the situation.

He asks that you go to the Spectre Requisitions office to use your authority to locate any information on the hanar from terminals on the Citadel.



The first terminal is located within the Embassy proper.





The second terminal is located in the entrance to the Docks: Holding Area, and the third is located farther back in the area, near Bay E28.

You are prompted to go back to the second terminal; from there, you gain the last bit of intel you need. Return to Jondum Bau in the Embassies to confront the hanar.

In the ensuing confrontation, your conversation choices can grant you Paragon or Renegade points.

The hanar admits their true allegiance to the Reapers and claims to have uploaded a virus to his homeworld's defensive network. Jondum tries to stop the upload but is waylaid by a bodyguard.

Shepard will automatically run to a computer to stop the virus, while the bodyguard mortally wounds Jondum. However, a Renegade interrupt will allow you to go back and save Jondum...at the cost of millions of lives on the hanar homeworld.

Saving Jondum grants you a Spectre team War Asset; saving the homeworld provides you a combined force of hanar and drell as a War Asset.

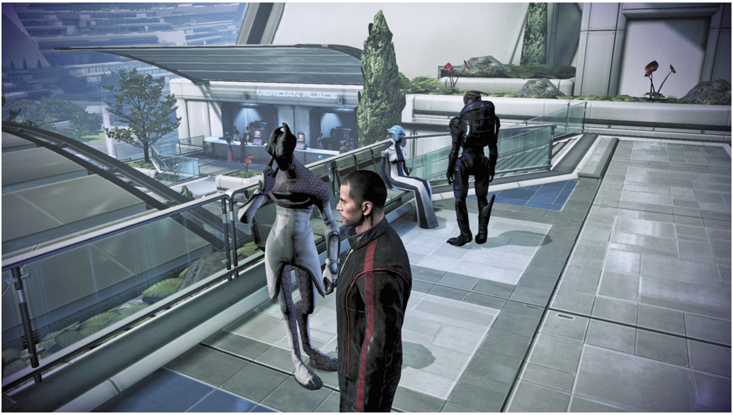
Shepards from *Mass Effect 2* who recruited the super-thief Kasumi and completed her Loyalty mission are able to get both War Assets, as Kasumi makes a return here if she survived the final mission.

She stops the upload while you save the Spectre.

Citadel: Heating Units

Availability: Act 1, available as of "Priority: Sur'Kesh"

Location: Presidium Commons



A salarian near the C-Sec office in the Presidium Commons worriedly discusses with a family on a colony that a clutch of eggs may not be receiving proper warmth, but apparently the hardware needed is not available on the open market.

Locate heating units on the N7 Noveria missions in the lower base area, directly across from the security console that you need to deactivate.

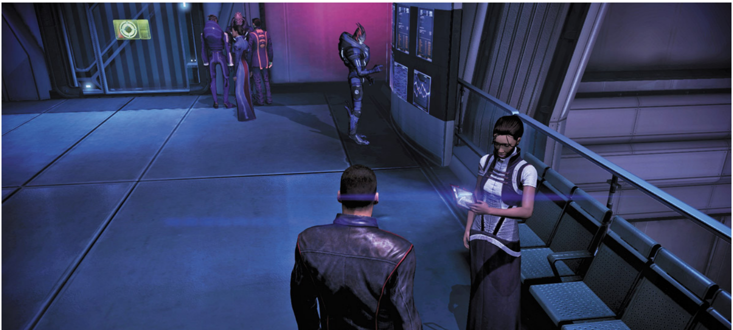
NOTE

If you miss this item during the mission, you can obtain it from the Spectre terminal for a small fee. After you purchase it, inform the salarian.

Citadel: Improved Power Grid

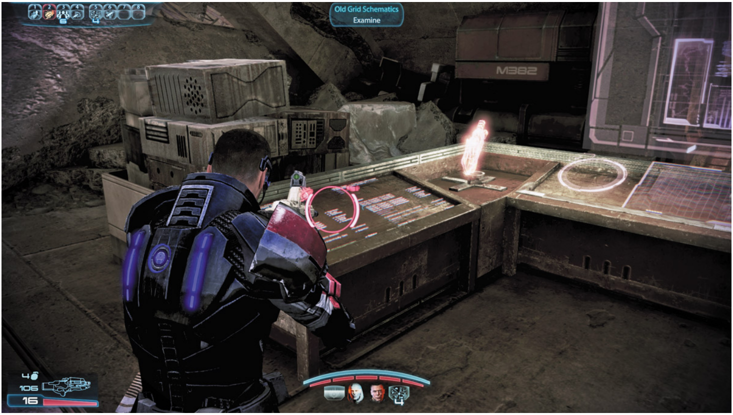
Availability: Act 1, available as of "Priority: Sur'Kesh"

Location: Purgatory



A human woman in front of Purgatory mentions her concerns about the failing power grid that helps keep the club in operation.

She says there's not a solution on the market to handle the increased power draw of the facility.



The solution for this is on Tuchanka, of all places, found during the N7 Cerberus attack mission. Don't miss the Old Grid Schematics in the control room for the ground-to-space artillery cannons.

After you locate the schematics, report back to the woman in front of the club. Return before completing the Genophage campaign, as she will leave afterward.

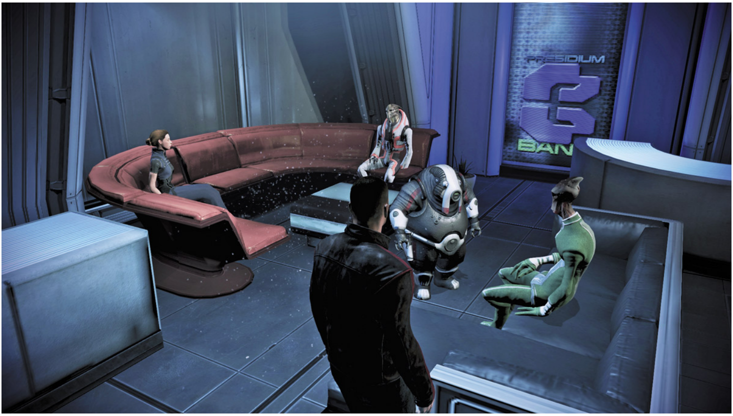
NOTE

If you miss this item during the mission, you can obtain it from the Spectre terminal for a small fee.

Irune: Book of Plenix

Availability: Act 1, available as of "Priority: Sur'Kesh"

Location: Presidium Commons



A volus near the Presidium Commons wants to find the Book of Plenix to remind his people to be charitable during this time of crisis.

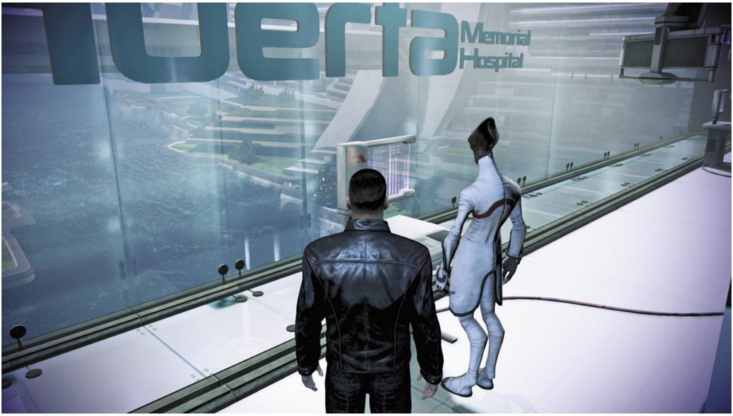
You may not have access to planet Irune immediately, but as soon as the Aethon Cluster opens up for exploration, travel there and scan Irune in the Aru system to locate the book.

Retrieving this artifact is worth another 15,000 credits.

Ismar Frontier: Prototype Components

Availability: Act 1, available as of "Priority: Sur'Kesh"

Location: Huerta Memorial Hospital



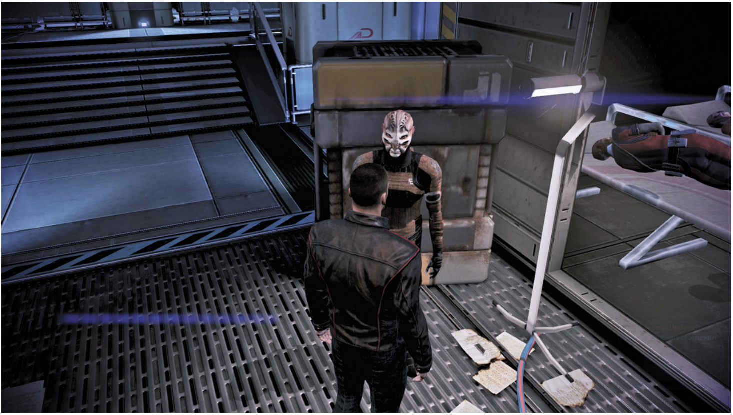
A salarian doctor in the hospital room across from where your injured comrade is staying seeks a prototype to help his people to fight better against the Reaper onslaught, but the needed components are in the Ismar Frontier.

As soon as the system is available, travel there and scan the planet Metaponto for the components. Be sure to get the components to the doctor as quickly as possible.

After the mission to cure the genophage on Tuchanka, he will not be in the hospital, preventing you from completing the quest.

Kite's Nest: Pillars of Strength

Location: Docks—Holding Area



A batarian prophet wants to give his people the strength to pull through the loss of their homeworld to the Reaper invasion, but he needs the Pillars of Strength to provide that inspiration.

Travel to the Kite's Nest cluster, the Harsa system. The planet Khar'Shan hides the pillars; just scan the world for them. Your generosity to the prophet is rewarded with 15000 credits.

Citadel: GX12 Thermal Pipe

Availability: Act 1, available as of "Priority: Sur'Kesh"

Location: Normandy—Engineering Deck

ENGINEERING

Engineer Adams may have raised concerns about the possibility of the Normandy's drive core venting into the engineering compartment in the event of an overloaded heat dissipation system.

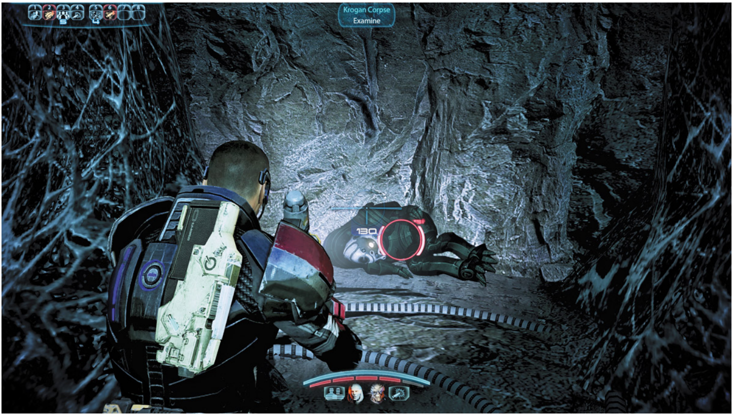
He will eventually request parts from the Citadel to help prevent this. You can buy the part directly from a shop on the Citadel, or you can actually requisition it from the shuttle bay on the Normandy.

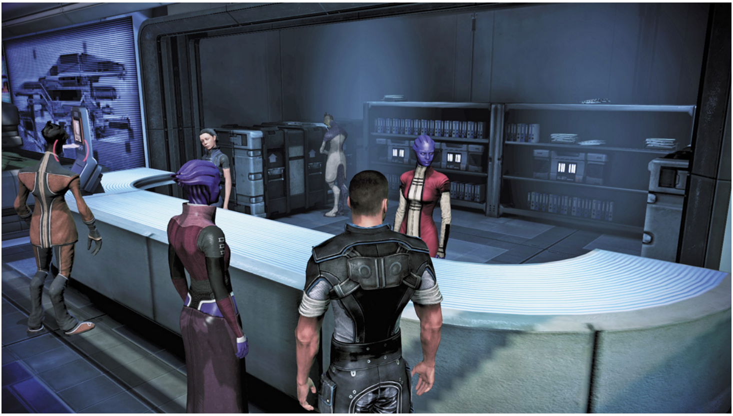
It will take time for Adams to finish the installation, so check back with him to wrap up the quest.

Citadel: Krogan Dying Message

Availability: Act 1, started during "Attican Traverse: The Rachni"

Location: Presidium Commons





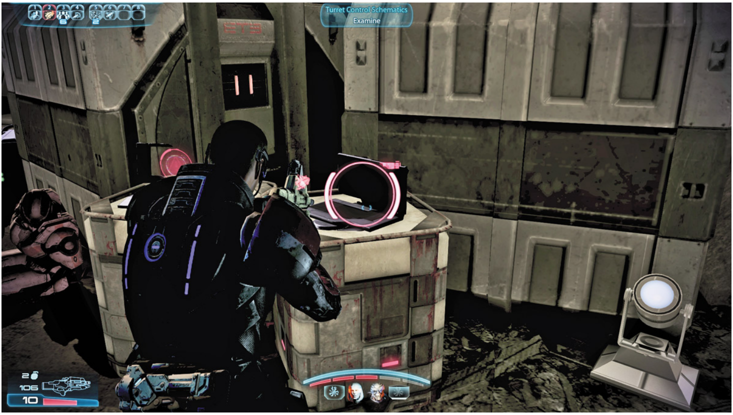
While investigating a missing krogan squad during “Attican Travers: The Rachni,” you may find a corpse of a krogan warrior who has left a final message to an asari named Ereba.

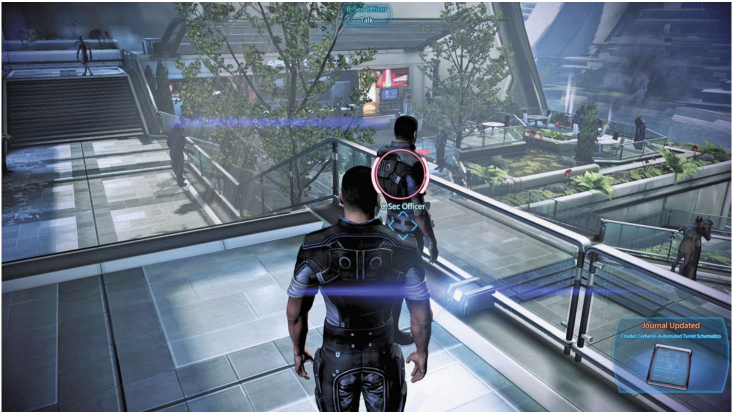
You can find her working at a shop in the Presidium Commons. It’s worth sticking around to listen to the krogan’s final words to her.

Citadel: Cerberus Automated Turret Schematics

Availability: Act 1, started during “Tuchanka: Bomb”

Location: Presidium Commons





During a side mission to Tuchanka in support of turians attempting to defuse a massive bomb, Cerberus abandons a set of Turret Control Schematics.

After Shepard and C-Sec repel the Cerberus coup attempt on the Citadel, several turrets left behind by the terrorists have C-Sec in fits trying to prevent them from activating and gunning down civilians who happen upon them.

To help solve that issue, hand an officer at the Presidium Commons the schematics you've found.

NOTE

If you miss this item during the mission, you can obtain it from the Spectre terminal for a small fee.

Athena Nebula: Hesperia-Period Statue

Availability: Act 2, available as of "Priority: Perseus Veil"

Location: Presidium Commons

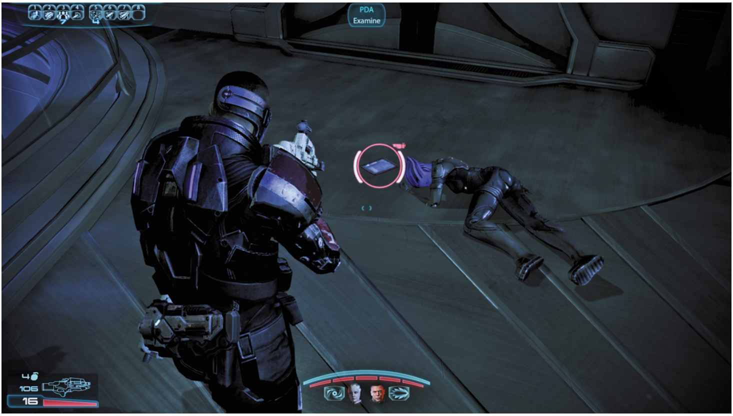
An asari in the Commons wants a statue from a particular period to assist with developing the Crucible. She can be found near the elevator entrance.

The statue itself can be found on the planet Polissa, in the Vernio system of the Athena Nebula. You'll receive 15000 credits for your trouble.

Citadel: Asari Widow

Availability: Act 2, found during "Lesuss: Ardat-Yakshi Monastery"

Location: Presidium Commons



During the side mission to the Ardat-Yakshi monastery, you will come across a dead asari commando. Inspecting her PDA will play her final message to her lover on the Citadel.

You can find the widow of this commando at the Presidium Commons on the Citadel, to the north-east of Apollo's Cafe, to give her the bad news.

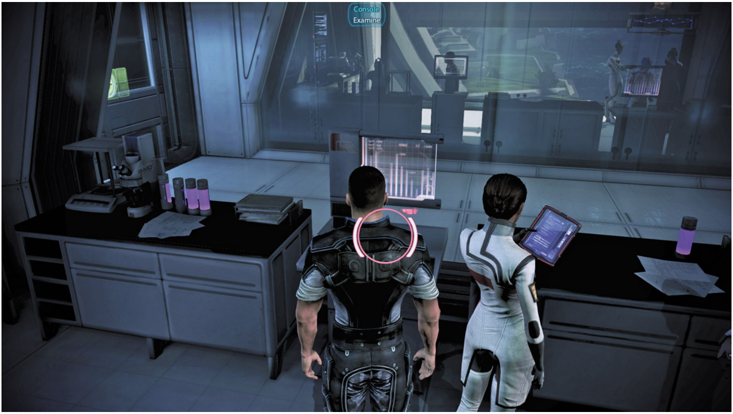
Citadel: Batarian Codes

Availability: Act 2, available as of "Priority: Perseus Veil"

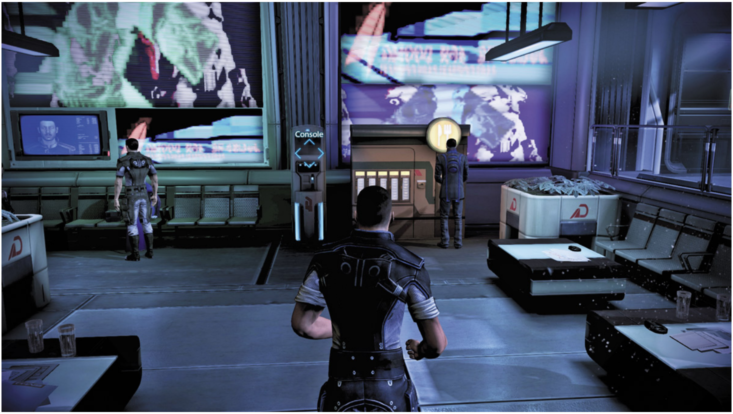
Location: Presidium Commons

Officer Noles, near the C-Sec office in the Commons, is tracking down a hacker using old batarian access codes from when that race had an embassy on the Citadel.

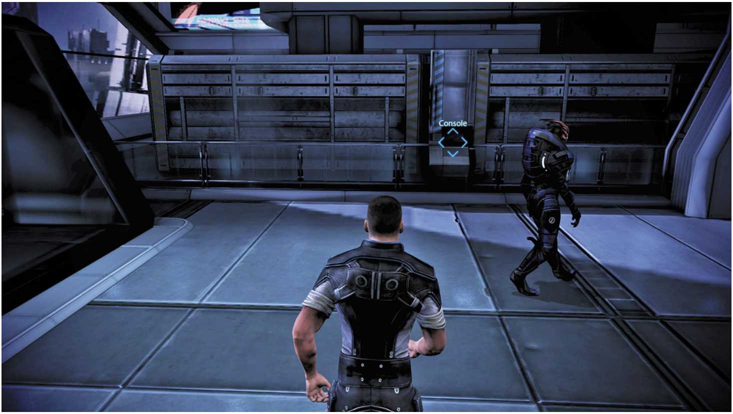
Head to the Spectre facility at the Embassies, and enable tracking of batarian access codes.

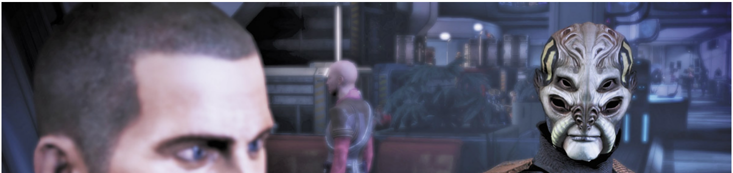


You find the first compromised console inside Huerta Memorial Hospital.



The second is located near the Normandy dock entrance, close to where you met Diana Allers.





The last console is located in the Docks: Holding area next to Bay E28. As soon as you access it, a batarian appears behind Shepard, a gun in hand.

This operative is apparently the highest-ranking military official of the entire Batarian Hegemony, and he places the fall of his empire and the loss of so many batarian lives on the shoulders of the Spectre.

Depending on your conversational choices, you can either talk the man down and earn the support of the remaining batarian forces as War Assets, or you can kill him.

However, to be able to convince him successfully, you will need a high enough Paragon or Renegade score; otherwise you will be forced to kill him.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

If you completed *Mass Effect 1* 's DLC “Bring Down the Sky,” you will know the batarian in question: Balak. He holds Shepard personally responsible and says that you should have killed him during the events of the DLC.

If you killed or arrested Balak during “Bring Down the Sky,” the effects of the batarian hacking attempts are much weaker and don’t affect human lives as much.

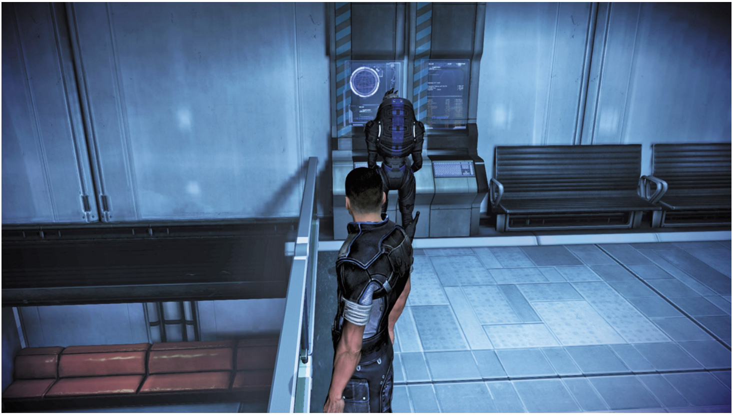
The culprit is a broken and beaten batarian who was just trying to help his people—without Balak there, the batarians aren’t nearly as dangerous, and Noles is already arresting him when you find him.

You have similar options if Balak is present—convince the batarians to join you, or let him be arrested.

Citadel: Cerberus Ciphers

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Perseus Veil”

Location: Citadel Embassies



In the wake of the Cerberus coup attempt, a turian C-Sec officer can be found near Donnel Udina's office, saying that he needs Cerberus ciphers to defeat their encryption in the future should they strike again.

You will not have a chance to actually get the needed ciphers until the N7 Communication Hub mission later in the game. During that op, check for a console marked with Cerberus Codes, and return them quickly to the C-Sec officer.

NOTE

If you miss this item during the mission, you can obtain it from the Spectre terminal for a small fee.

Citadel: Cerberus Retribution

Availability: Act 2, available as of "Priority: Perseus Veil"

Location: Presidium Commons

Near the C-Sec station in the Commons, you overhear a couple discussing the fate of a traitorous C-Sec officer who betrayed his comrades to Cerberus during the coup; apparently, they set up a hit on the man.

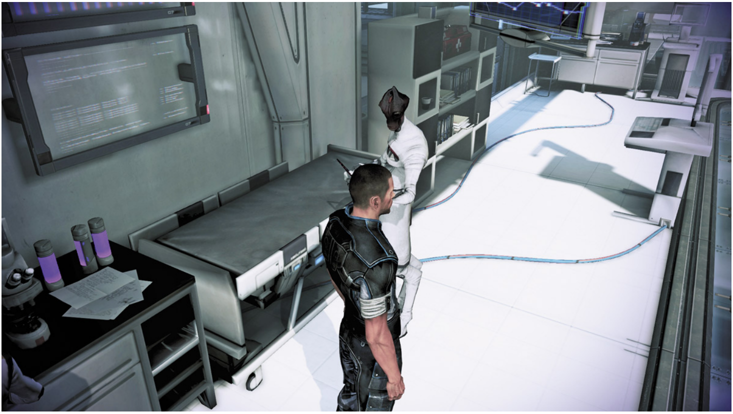
Go to the C-Sec station and confront the assassin, a former Alliance captain.

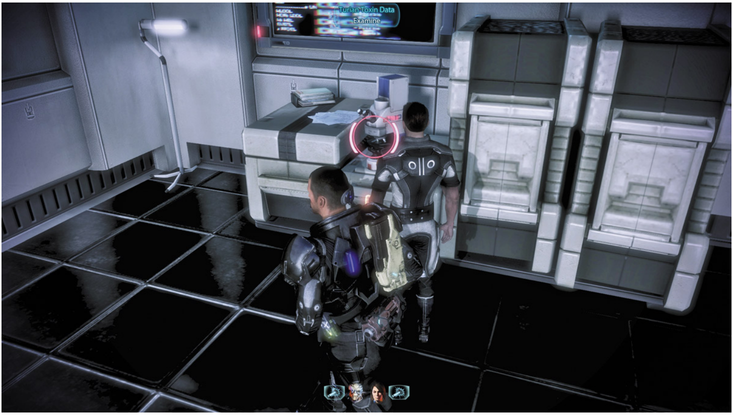
You can attempt to talk him out of his assassination, but Shepards with high enough Paragon or Renegade scores can either pull rank on the man to get him to back off, or they can use their Spectre authority to let the hit happen "legally."

Citadel: Cerberus Turian Poison

Availability: Act 2, available as of "Priority: Perseus Veil"

Location: Huerta Memorial Hospital





According to a salarian doctor, a turian general is dying due to a special poison tailored to his species by Cerberus. You can locate Turian Toxin Data during the "Arrae: Ex-Cerberus Scientists" side mission.

Check the small hub area you arrive in after the initial landing combat. It's near the med-bay where Jacob Taylor can be found (assuming he survived the events of *Mass Effect 2*).

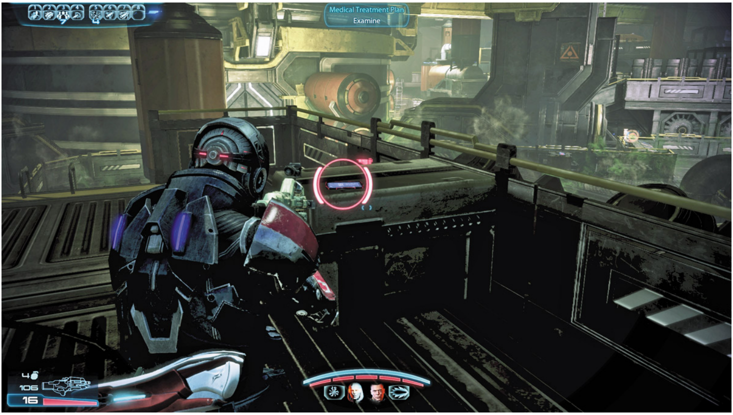
NOTE

If you miss this item during the mission, you can obtain it from the Spectre terminal for a small fee.

Citadel: Chemical Treatment

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Perseus Veil”

Location: Huerta Memorial Hospital



Doctors at Huerta Memorial are unable to come up with a treatment to a chemical poisoning that will eventually kill all affected patients. What you’re looking for can only be found during the “N7: Fuel Reactor” mission.

The Chemical Treatment Plan is located on a PDA close to where the mission begins atop a shipping crate, so don’t miss it.

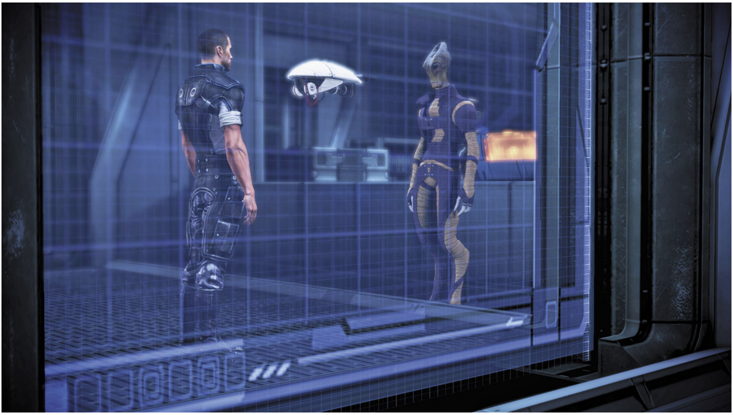
NOTE

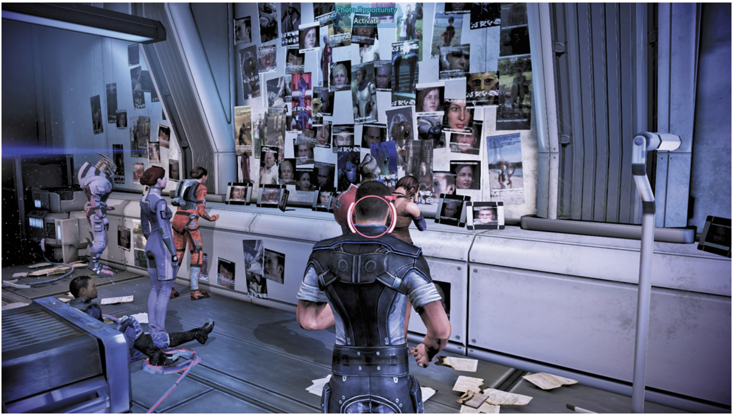
If you miss this item during the mission, you can obtain it from the Spectre terminal for a small fee.

Citadel: Inspirational Stories

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Perseus Veil”

Location: Docks: Holding Area





A salarian filmmaker is being denied access to the makeshift refugee camps on the docks, citing that C-Sec believes he will only prove disruptive.

If you offer to help, all you need to do is to explore the entire dock area, interacting with photo opportunities until the filmmaker is satisfied with what you’ve got; then report back to him to wrap up this mission.

Only photo opportunities dealing with refugees count toward completing this mission.

Citadel: Kakliosaur Fossil

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Perseus Veil”

Location: Presidium Commons

According to a salarian geneticist at the Presidium apartments, krogan used to ride tamed kakliosaurs into battle on toxic worlds, but the animals no longer exist.

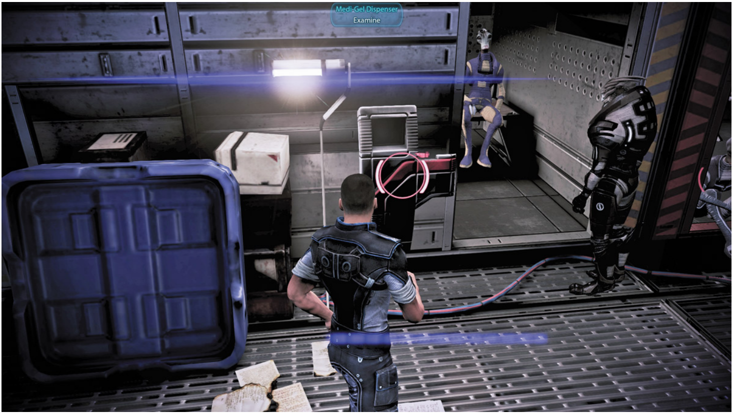
However, with a preserved fossil, it may be possible to clone them en masse to support krogan forces today. Head to the Argus Rho cluster, and explore the Phoenix system.

The planet Intai’sei happens to have the fossil he needs. The kakliosaur fossil is worth 15000 credits.

Citadel: Medi-Gel Sabotage

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Perseus Veil”

Location: Docks: Holding Area



The Medi-Gel dispensers around the refugee camp have been tampered with in the wake of the Cerberus coup attempt, and patients may die if this is not resolved.

After hearing out the request of the doctor, simply explore the entirety of the docks, interacting with dispensers as you find them, until you're prompted to return to the doctor.

Though the problem is fixed, the saboteur remains at large...

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

Series vets with imported characters may be amused at the return of Conrad Verner, the self-professed greatest fan of Commander Shepard—that is, assuming he survived this long.

Conrad will find the saboteur for you but will be shot and killed...unless Shepard also completed “Citadel: Rita’s Sister” in *Mass Effect 1* , in which case Conrad survives and improves your Galactic Readiness rating.

Also, Conrad offers to give you data that could help with construction of the Crucible.

The assistance is minimal, but if you completed “Feros: Data Recovery,” “UNC: Asari Writings” in ME1 and obtained an Elkoss Combine license, Conrad gives you a much larger reward.

Citadel: Medical Supplies

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Perseus Veil”

Location: Normandy Med Bay

Your chosen doctor aboard the Normandy will eventually inform you that you have an abundance of supplies that could be exchanged for things the ship needs.

You’re directed to speak with a turian named Tactus, who is considered the leader of the refugees in the makeshift camp on the docks.

He will try to haggle with the commander, and you have the chance to earn Paragon or Renegade points based on your decisions.

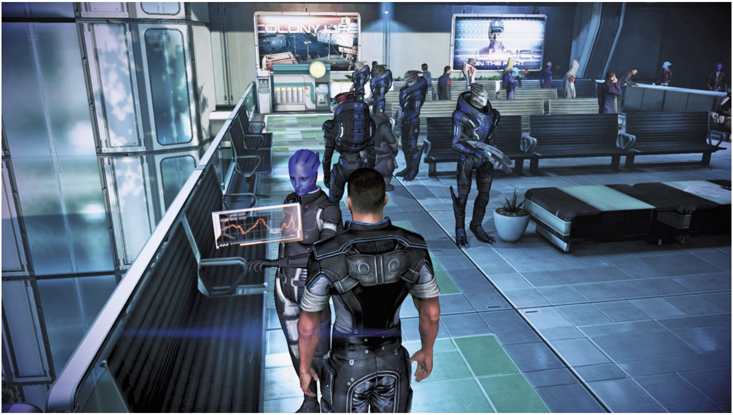
You must use the special charm/persuade option to successfully convince Tactus, or you will not receive his aid.

Your reward on this mission changes based on which doctor you convinced to board the Normandy. Doctor Chakwas gives the player improved Medi-Gel, while Dr. Michel improves your Medi-Gel capacity.

Citadel: Reaper Code Fragments

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Perseus Veil”

Location: Citadel Embassies



An asari commando in the Citadel Embassies needs a Reaper code fragment to help her fleets predict where the enemy will strike next.

Your only chance at a piece of nonmalignant code comes during the “Rannoch: Geth Fighter Squadrons” mission.

While exploring the geth server, keep an eye out for a string of Reaper code that is separated from other fragments.

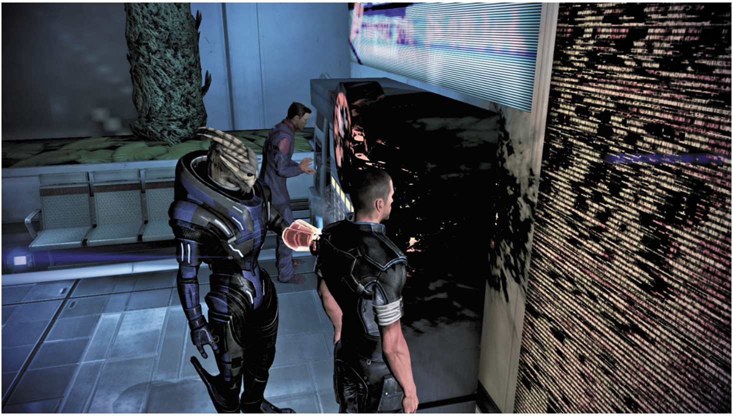
NOTE

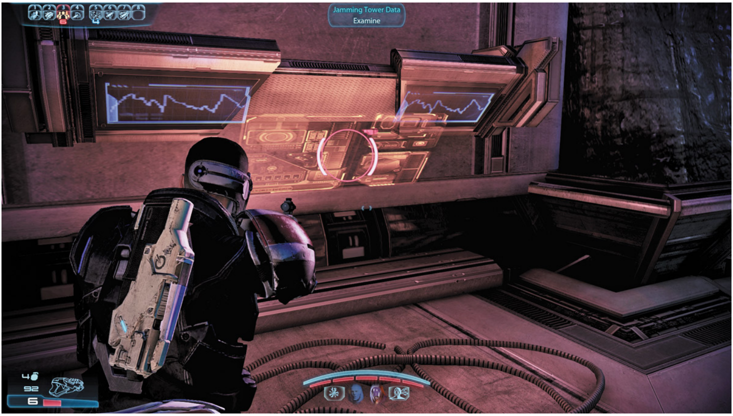
If you miss this item during the mission, you can obtain it from the Spectre terminal for a small fee.

Citadel: Target Jamming Technology

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Perseus Veil”

Location: Presidium Commons





A turian C-Sec officer near the cafe in the Commons wants to improve the Citadel's ability to interfere with hostile targeting systems in the event of another attack.

During the "Rannoch: Admiral Koris" mission, inspect the various computer terminals located throughout the geth jamming tower facility to find Jamming Tower Data. Take it back to the turian.

NOTE

If you miss this item during the mission, you can obtain it from the Spectre terminal for a small fee.

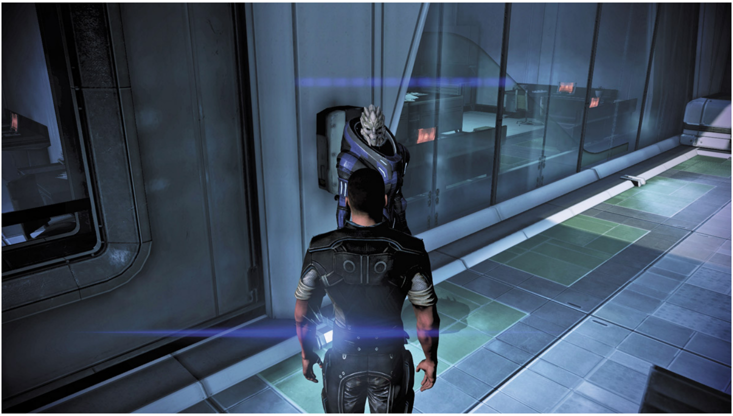
Citadel: Volus Ambassador

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Perseus Veil”

Location: Presidium Commons

Primarch Victus sends you a disturbing e-mail in the aftermath of the Cerberus coup attempt. A turian cruiser was ambushed by the terrorists, and the evidence points to volus ambassador Din Korlack.

Go to the Spectre offices and use the terminal there to begin the investigation into Korlack.



WAITING IN
INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Go to the embassy guard standing along the wall to the elevator’s left. After speaking with him, you’ll be granted access to Korlack’s office.

After listening to the third entry on his terminal, search for the bug in his room.

Once you have the bug, you can start narrowing down the location of the volus. You're automatically transported to the Presidium Commons.

Head to the apartments and search the doors until you enter the room where the volus is being kept.

Afterward, Din Korlack explains his Cerberus connections and the reason he's got a bounty on his head.

He tries to make a deal with you: You can keep a colony safe from attack, or you can take his offered bomber squadron as an asset. There's no way to grab both.

Your choice also grants you a measure of Paragon or Renegade points.

PREVIOUSLY IN *MASS EFFECT*

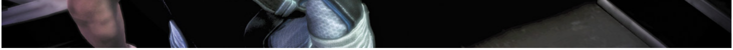
If players importing a Shepard from *Mass Effect 2* hired Zaeed Massani for the battle against the Collectors and completed his loyalty mission to ensure his survival, the infamous mercenary makes an appearance for this side quest.

He might be able to twist an arm or two in your favor. If Zaeed survives the mission (which he will, if loyal from *Mass Effect 2*), you can recruit him to assist in the war effort in the Refugee Camp.

Citadel: Wounded Batarian

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Perseus Veil”

Location: Presidium Commons



A human and a turian near the apartments in the Commons can be overheard discussing a batarian who was wounded in the Cerberus coup and who is now receiving aid for his injuries.

However, it is possible he's a terrorist. Once you get his turian nurse to let you see him, the batarian all but confirms what the civilians were saying.

You're given a choice: shut off his life-support or call his nurse back to him.

Dekuuna: Code of the Ancients

Availability: Act 2, available as of "Priority: Perseus Veil"

Location: Purgatory

An elcor in front of Purgatory wants to retrieve the Code of the Ancients, left behind on its homeworld of Dekuuna.

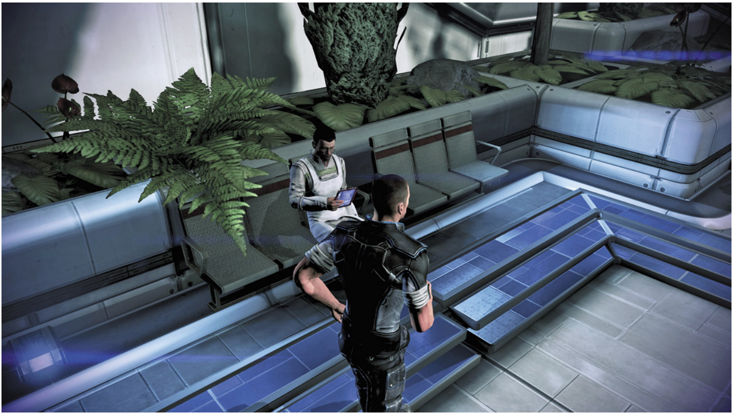
Once you're able to explore the Silean Nebula, travel to the Phontes system within the cluster.

Scan Dekuuna for the artifact, and report your findings back to the elcor. You're rewarded 15000 credits in compensation.

Hades Nexus: Obelisk of Karza

Availability: Act 2, available as of "Priority: Perseus Veil"

Location: Presidium Commons



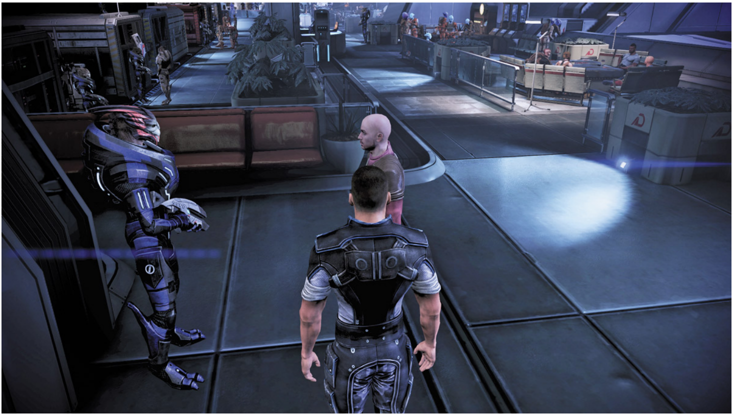
A human researcher sitting near the cafe in the Commons wants an artifact from the Hades Nexus cluster.

You might not have access to this cluster right away, but as soon as you do, the planet Kopis in the Hoplos system hides the obelisk. You pocket another 15000 credit reward for the obelisk.

Hades Nexus: Prothean Sphere

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Perseus Veil”

Location: Docks: Holding Area



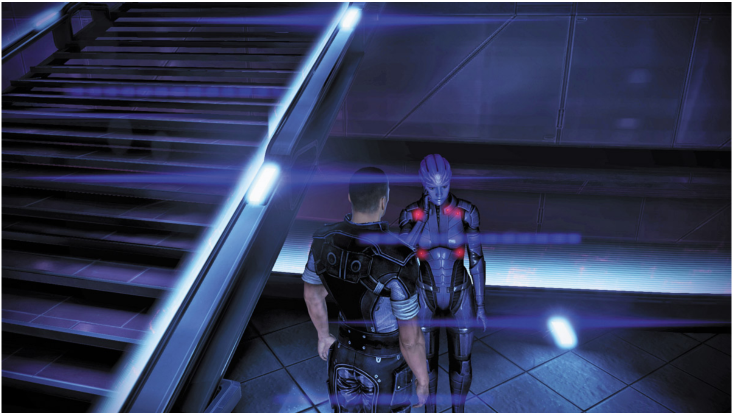
A colonist near Bay E28 claims there is a Prothean sphere on the planet Gei Hinon in the Hades Nexus, and he wants to sell this information to the Alliance.

The planet can be found in the Sheol system. You receive 15000 credits after you inform the colonist that you've located the sphere.

Nimbus Cluster: Library of Asha

Availability: Act 2, available as of "Priority: Perseus Veil"

Location: Purgatory



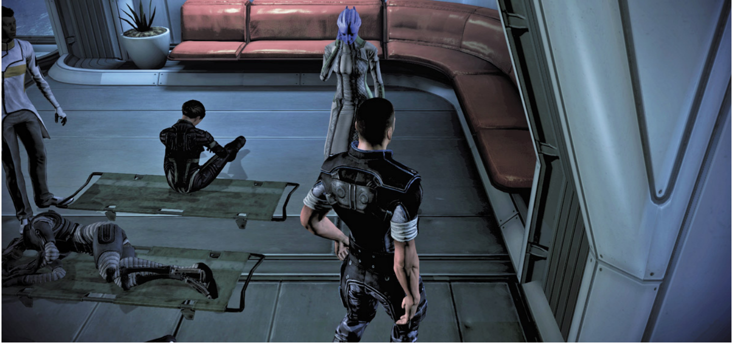
You can find a frustrated asari commando complaining that while the galaxy is caving in all around them, her people are in this club, just dancing.

She feels that the Library of Asha, found in the Nimbus Cluster, will help produce more fighters than dancers. Scan the planet Carcosa in the Agaiou system. The library is worth another 15000 credit reward.

Silean Nebula: Rings of Alune

Availability: Act 2, available as of "Priority: Perseus Veil"

Location: Huerta Memorial Hospital



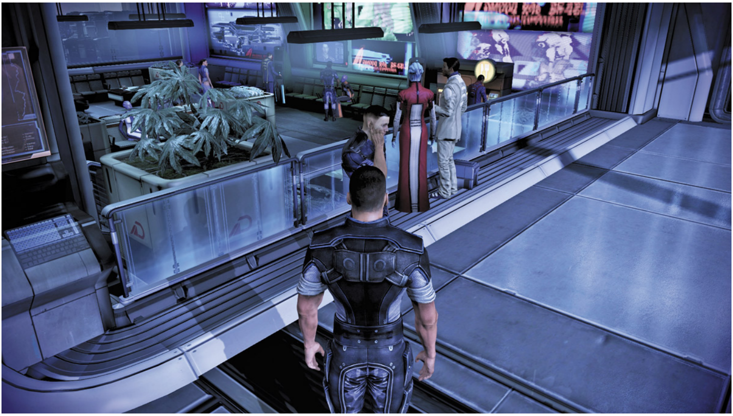
You can find this asari right next to the hospital entrance. She feels the Rings of Alune will inspire her people to provide greater assistance to hospitals like the one she's standing in.

Take the Normandy to the Silean Nebula, Teyolia system, and scan the planet Nevos. Bring the rings back to the asari nets you 15000 credits.

Valhallan Threshold: Prothean Data Drives

Availability: Act 2, available as of "Priority: Perseus Veil"

Location: Docking Bay D-24



You overhear an Alliance Marine discussing sensitive information over an unsecured communicator regarding Prothean data drives.

Travel to the Valhallan Threshold, the Paz system, and scan the planet Garvug to locate the drives. The officer thanks you for your assistance with another 15000 credits.

Dekuuna: Elcor Extraction

Availability: Act 2, available as of “Priority: Thessia”

Location: Citadel Embassies

An elcor ambassador desperately wishes to save some of his people stranded on the homeworld of Dekuuna; however, he has been turned away by almost every other diplomat he’s asked.

Return to the Phontes system in the Silean Nebula, and scan Oltan for any survivors. Return to the ambassador to complete the mission.

A Word on Ambient Conversations

The Citadel is the center of the galactic community, and while you’re running across the galaxy in a desperate bid to save it, you’ll oftentimes overhear small conversations between people.

Sometimes you may need to eavesdrop on the conversation over the course of many visits to hear the whole story. This can sometimes lead to special options at the Spectre terminal in the Citadel Embassies.

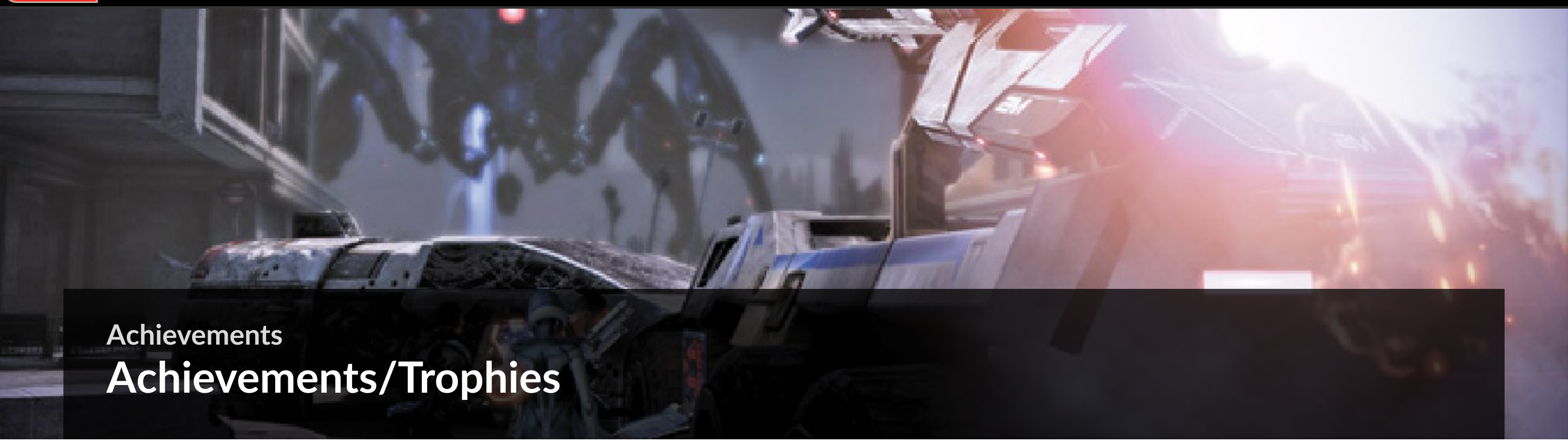
For example, you may overhear a devastated asari commando relate her tale to a psychiatrist at Huerta Memorial Hospital. She wants a gun and a transfer to a facility away from humans.

You eventually will see an option on the Spectre terminal to use your status to grant her a gun. The consequences of this will affect a War Asset.

Other conversations you hear require input from Commander Shepard. You can choose to take a specific side during some debates, or lend words of wisdom to a group.

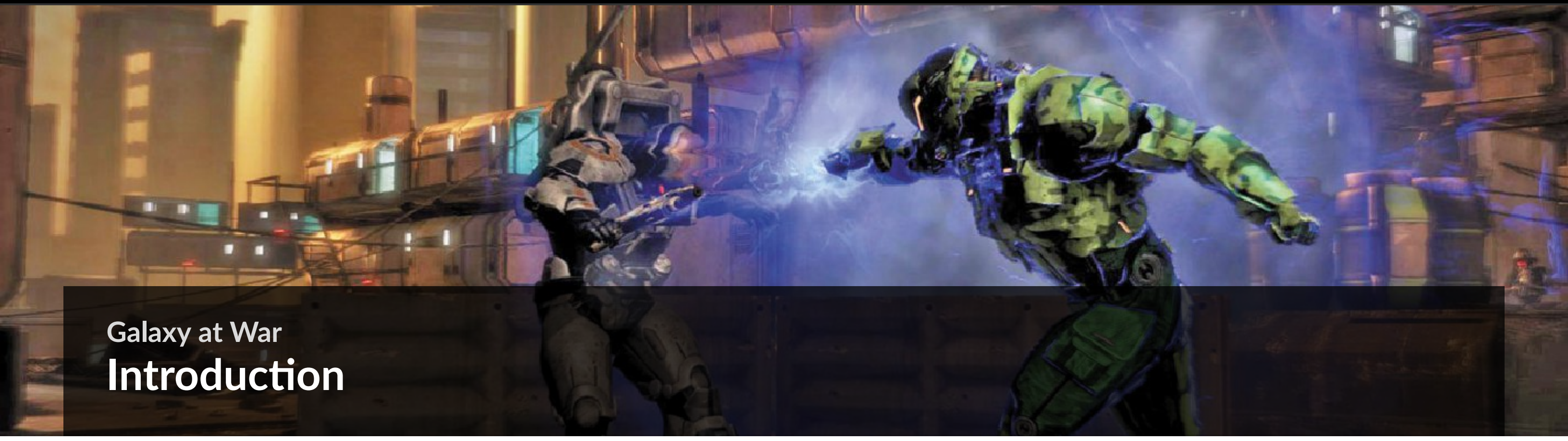
While none of these ambient conversations count as quests that are tracked in your Codex, they all grant points to your reputation and affect War Assets.

Consider how you deal with these interactions seriously, as they can build up to have an effect on your endgame.



Achievements/Trophies

id	Achievement / Trophy	Description
1	Driven	Return to active duty.
2	Bringer of War	Chase down an assassin.
3	Mobilizer	Bring a veteran officer aboard.
4	World Shaker	Destroy an Atlas dropped from orbit.
5	Pathfinder	Explore a lost city.
6	Tunnel Rat	Survive the swarm.
7	Party Crasher	Sabotage a dreadnought.
8	Hard Target	Call down an orbital strike.
9	Saboteur	Disable a group of fighter squadrons.
10	Arbiter	Win a political standoff.
11	Last Witness	Extract ancient technology.
12	Executioner	Defeat an old adversary.
13	Well Connected	Send a warning across the galaxy.
14	Fact Finder	Discover an enemy's monstrous origin.
15	Liberator	Stop a Cerberus kidnapping.
16	Problem Solver	Evacuate a scientific facility.
17	Patriot	Make the final assault.
18	Legend	Mission accomplished.
19	Shopaholic	Visit a store in the single-player campaign.
20	Master and Commander	Deliver most of the Galaxy at War assets to the final conflict.
21	Lost and Found	Dispatch 10 probes to retrieve people or resources in Reaper territory.
22	Long Service Medal	Complete Mass Effect 3 twice or once with a Mass Effect 2 import.
23	Insanity	Finish the game on Insanity without changing difficulty after leaving Earth.
24	A Personal Touch	Modify a weapon.
25	Paramour	Establish or rekindle a romantic relationship.
26	Combined Arms	Perform any combination of 50 biotic combos or tech bursts.
27	Focused	Evolve any of your powers to rank 6.
28	Recruit	Kill 250 enemies.
29	Soldier	Kill 1,000 enemies.
30	Veteran	Kill 5,000 enemies.
31	Bruiser	Kill 100 enemies with melee attacks.
32	Untouchable	Escape a Reaper in the galaxy map.
33	Defender	Attain the highest level of readiness in each theater of war.
34	Overload Specialist	Overload the shields of 100 enemies.
35	Sky High	Lift 100 enemies off the ground with powers.
36	Pyromaniac	Set 100 enemies on fire with powers.
37	Eye of the Hurricane	Kill a brute while it's charging you.
38	Mail Slot	Kill 10 guardians with headshots from the front while their shields are raised.
39	Hijacker	Hijack an Atlas mech.
40	Giant Killer	Defeat a Harvester.
41	Enlisted	Start a character in multiplayer or customize a character in single-player.
42	Tour of Duty	Finish all multiplayer maps or all N7 missions in single-player.
43	Always Prepared	Obtain two noncustomizable suits of armor.
44	Tourist	Complete one multiplayer match or two N7 missions.
45	Explorer	Complete three multiplayer matches or five N7 missions.
46	Gunsmith	Upgrade any weapon to Level 10.
47	Almost There	Reach Level 15 in multiplayer or level 50 in single-player.
48	Peak Condition	Reach Level 20 in multiplayer or level 60 in single-player.
49	Battle-Scarred	Promote a multiplayer character to the Galaxy at War or import an ME3 character.
50	Unwavering	Finish all multiplayer maps on Gold or all single-player missions on Insanity.



Galaxy at War

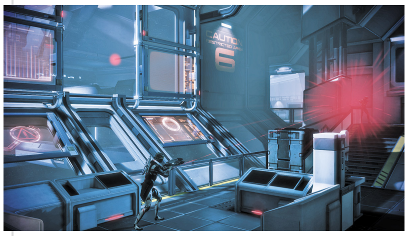
Introduction

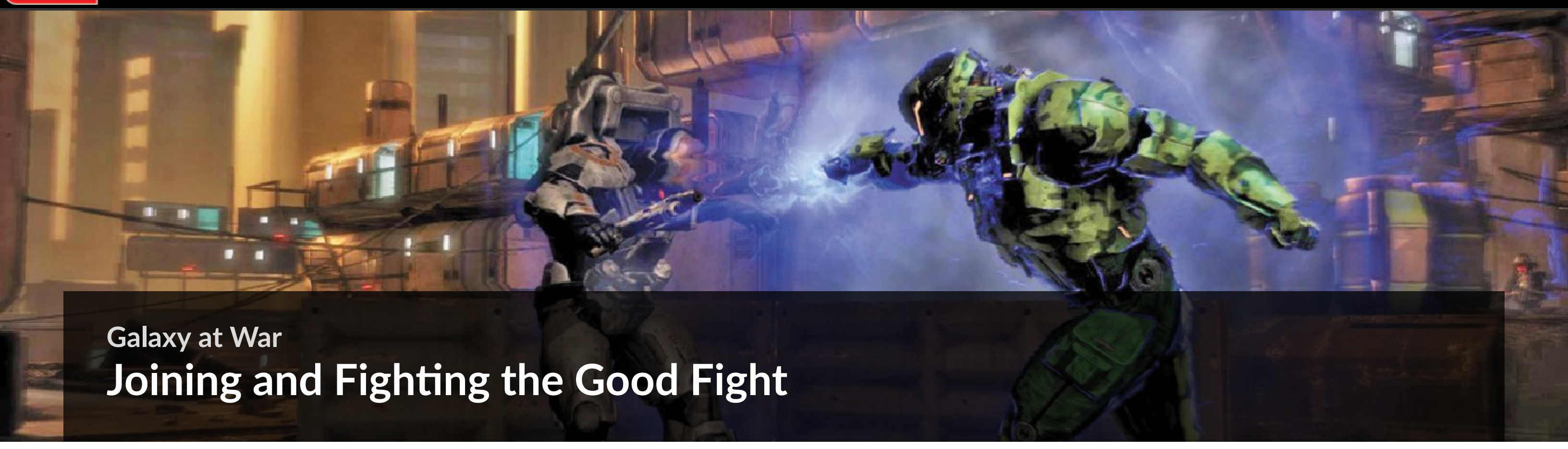
A first for the franchise, Mass Effect 3 integrates an intense cooperative multiplayer mode with the Reaper War as it unfolds throughout the single-player campaign.

As Commander Shepard fights across the galaxy, four-man squads—representing the best the Citadel races have to offer—are sent into vital enemy positions hit by the Normandy team, intending to maintain the pressure on Cerberus, the Reapers, and the geth.

Players are able to step into the shoes of these unsung heroes, fighting against steep odds while trying to complete objectives until they can be evacuated from the field...or until the last soldier falls lifeless to the ground.

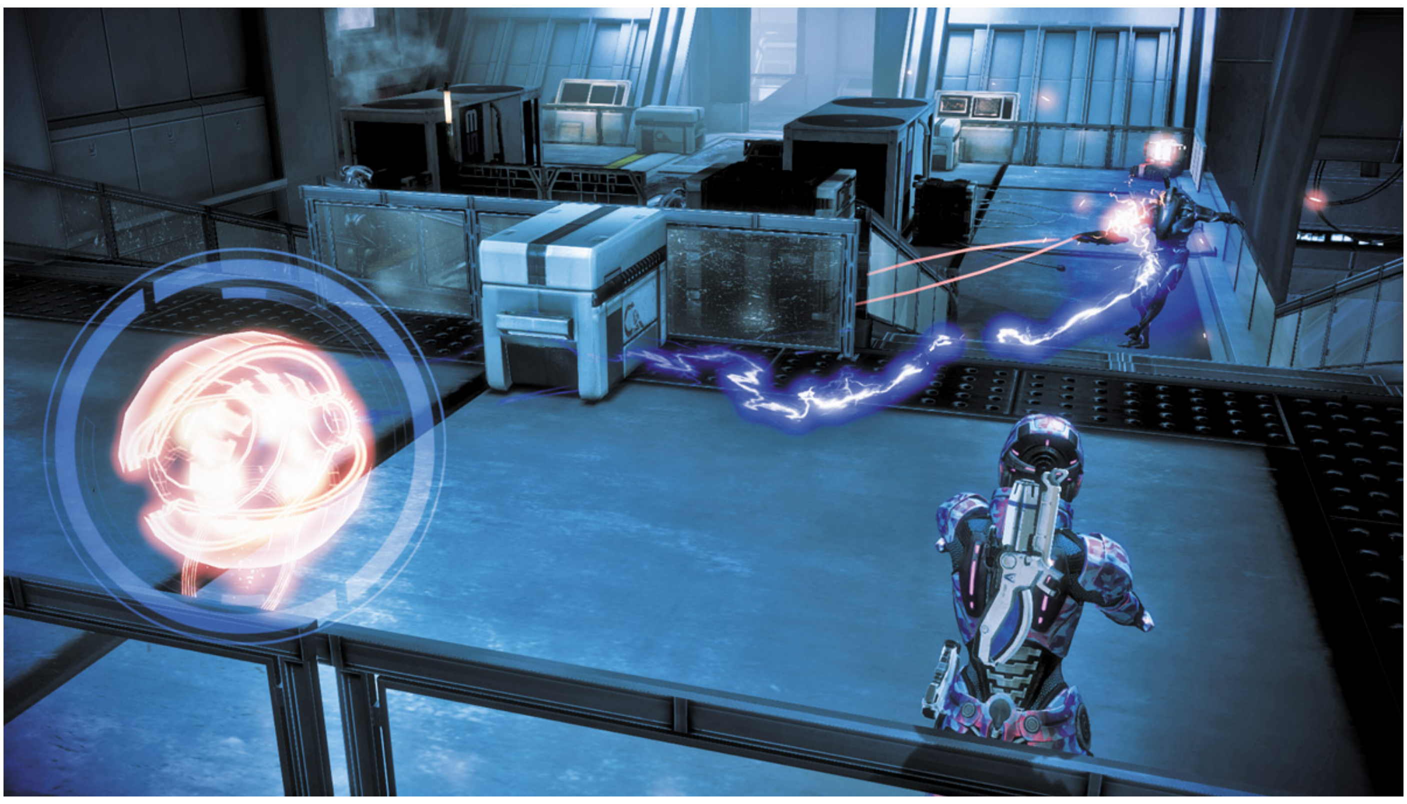
Click images below to enlarge.





Galaxy at War

Joining and Fighting the Good Fight



In many ways, the multiplayer mode controls the same as the single-player experience, with some very important differences.

The soldiers you create, regardless of race, do not share Commander Shepard's same potential. As individuals, they wield fewer Biotic powers or technical skills, and they can carry fewer weapons.

They are not as resilient under fire. Alone, a single mistake makes their death almost certain, even with the best equipment.

Working alongside teammates, communicating with them, protecting them, and helping them up when the fight gets rough, all can tip the odds in your favor.

You can't afford to be quite as reckless here. Your position in relation to the enemy and your squadmates can be the difference between success and failure.

When you first start up multiplayer, you must create an operative from any of the following classes: Adept, Engineer, Infiltrator, Sentinel, Soldier, and Vanguard.

Each class has three active abilities that you can use in combat, and these skill sets change depending on the race played.

Humans (male and female) are the starting race for all players, with turians, asari, salarians, quarians, drell, and krogans being unlockable over the course of gameplay.

In addition to these powers, each race brings two special skills to every class, which can lean your character closer toward melee or ranged combat.

As you battle through every mission, you gain experience, which goes toward leveling your character and their powers.

You also earn credits that you can use in the multiplayer store to further enhance your fighting ability.

Buying the offered reinforcement packs in the store delivers to your inventory intensely powerful Cobra missile launchers, emergency Ops Survival Kits, lifesaving Medi-Gel, and spare thermal clips; these can all give you a potential out in desperate situations, while premission equipment enhancements can boost your abilities for the next sortie.

You might even score new weapons, enhanced variants of weapons you already own, mods for each gun type, and visual modification options for every race and class, and you may even unlock new races that you can use in future battles.

The peak level for all classes in multiplayer is 20, and these experience levels are shared for every available character in a given class, making it easy for players to switch between an asari or a human in the Vanguard class in order to take advantage of specific abilities.

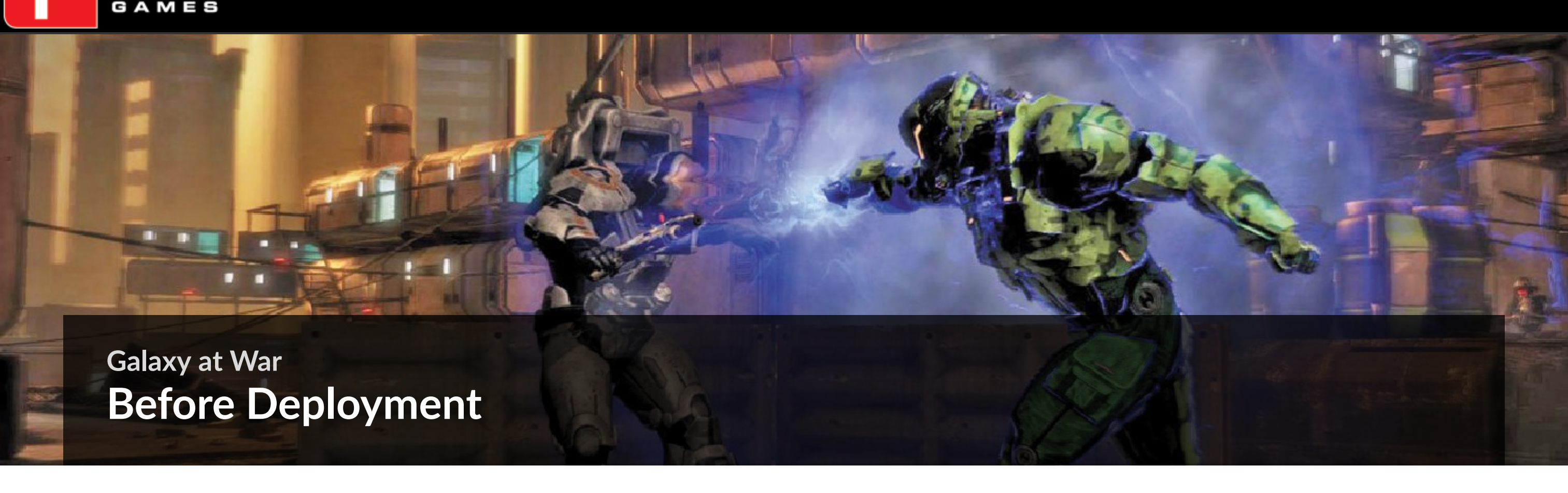
It is possible to Promote a maxed-out class, which sends them away to the front lines of the Reaper War, becoming a War Asset that contributes to the total effort and increasing your N7 rating.

You'll have to restart that class from Level 1, but promoting characters continues to contribute to your total War Assets.

Additionally, participation and successful completion of these special operations contributes to the galaxy's Readiness rating across five different fronts that are displayed upon signing into the multiplayer mode.

The better your Readiness, the better your War Assets contribute to the fighting. Bear in mind that Readiness does fall by a set amount each day, so if you want to keep it in the green, you should complete these battles to offset this decay.

For players without a Shepard to import, this can affect your ending choices during your first run through of the single-player campaign, so to give the galaxy a better shot at surviving the Reapers, you'll want to participate.



Galaxy at War

Before Deployment

Once you've signed into Multiplayer, you can either choose Quick Match, which will find an open game for you, or you can choose to create a new match, public or private.

From there, you will need to select a character for your online squad. You have many options for how to prepare your chosen hero for the trials ahead.

The gear you bring to each fight, and the choices you make when distributing experience points to your various powers, can greatly improve your squad's chances at surviving in the field, but your pregame prep is not limited to this alone.

Prior to each mission, players can choose from three difficulty levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

These difficulties determine how much health your enemies have, how early the more dangerous units in an opposing force begin to appear, their overall aggressiveness, and how proficient they are with their weapons.

Bronze is excellent for players getting used to the game and for giving lesser equipped and lower-level players a fighting chance.

The Silver difficulty can ramp things up, providing a good challenge for midlevel teams with solid equipment. Gold will test the skills and patience of even the best of the best, turning the most basic enemies into a force to be reckoned with.

Note

Remember that all characters of the same given class share the same experience level, making it easy to switch between different races to better complement your teammates!

You can inspect the loadouts of other players from the game lobby. Use this to determine what weapons you may want to take or to see what a really good player is dominating with.

Note

Your N7 rating is the accumulated character-levels you've earned for each class of character. The only way to push your N7 rating past 120 is by promoting your squads. (A rating of 120 represents all classes maximized to level 20.)

When a class reaches level 20, the player may choose to promote and send the class to their single-player Galaxy at War.

Promoting a class to the Galaxy at War resets its level to 1 but also increases the player's N7 leaderboard score by 10. Only your character's level is reset. Weapons, mods, and consumables are kept.

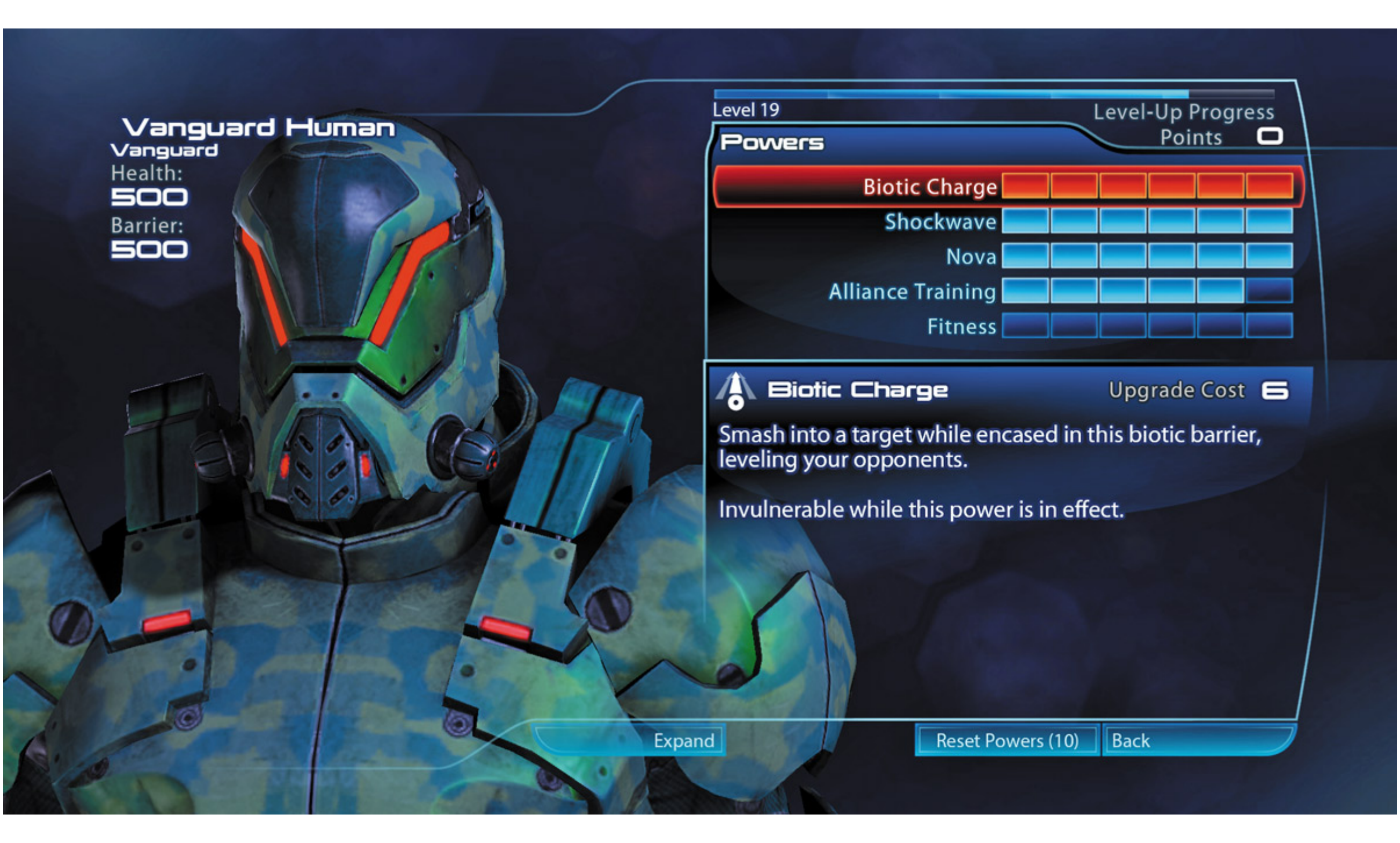
In addition to difficulty, players can select what forces they will be facing and where the fighting will take place.

There are special experience bonuses for randomizing all of these variables; consequently, this can get very, very difficult.

These random factors can work in your favor, but the real issue is that you'll not be able to tailor your equipment to special situations.

You also might get stuck with a Gold difficulty campaign on a map that favors an enemy you are ill prepared for.

Powers



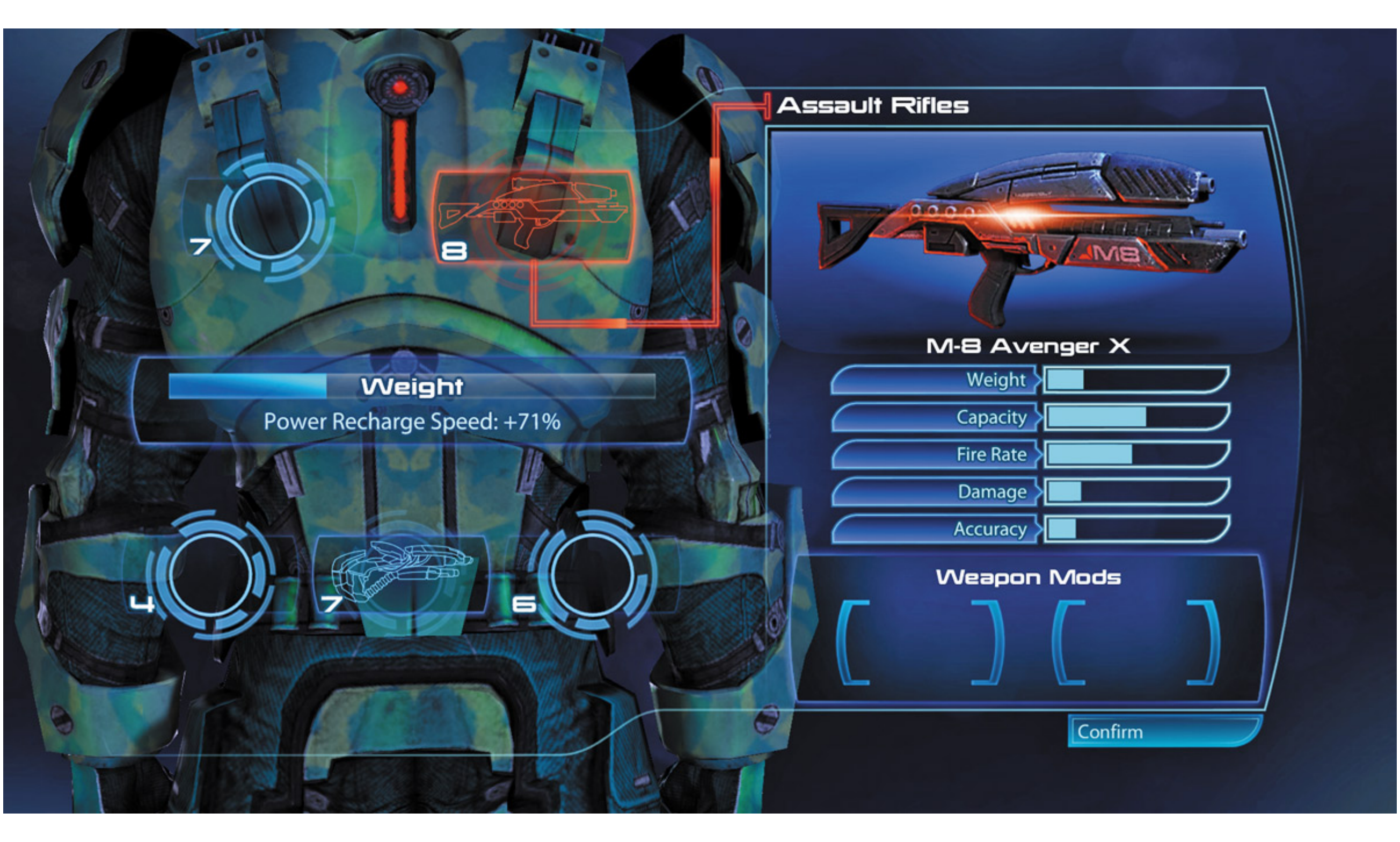
Smash into a target while encased in this biotic barrier, leveling your opponents.

Invulnerable while this power is in effect.

When your guns aren't enough, your character comes with a variety of special abilities to try and equal the odds. Before each mission, check the Powers menu to see if you can't distribute any points to abilities you find most useful.

Be very certain of your decisions! If you don't have a respec token, you're stuck with what you purchase once you leave this menu!

Weapons



The meat and potatoes for your squad member, the weapon system in multiplayer works almost the same as it does in single-player.

Each character has a weight limit they can comfortably manage, and staying under that limit can significantly increase the speed at which powers recharge. Exceed it, and you lengthen the cooldown times.

Over time, it is possible to increase a character's carrying capacity with the right points in the right abilities. All weapons can also accept mods to change the various performance parameters.

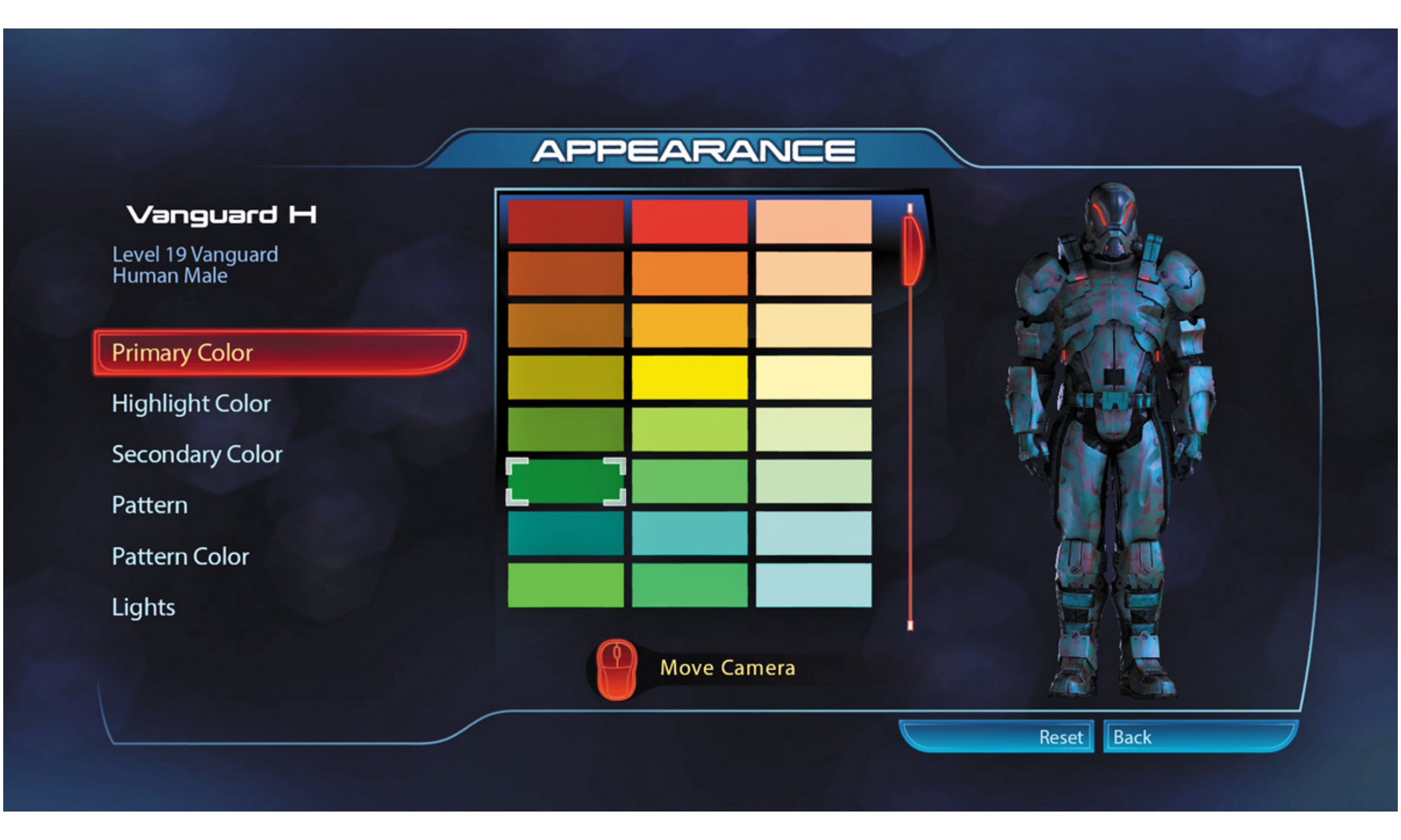
Where things are different is that a character is limited to two weapons at any time, regardless of their weight. This forces players to carefully consider what they arm themselves with.

Some will want to carry the heaviest guns they can, sacrificing power cooldown speed for raw firepower.

Others will want to travel light, placing a greater value on using their powers repeatedly and often.Optimal loadouts depend on your preferences.

If you're a good enough shot that you want to carry the heaviest sniper rifle possible and keep a shotgun handy for close encounters, you can do that and still come out on top, despite the massive cooldowns you'll have in all of your powers.

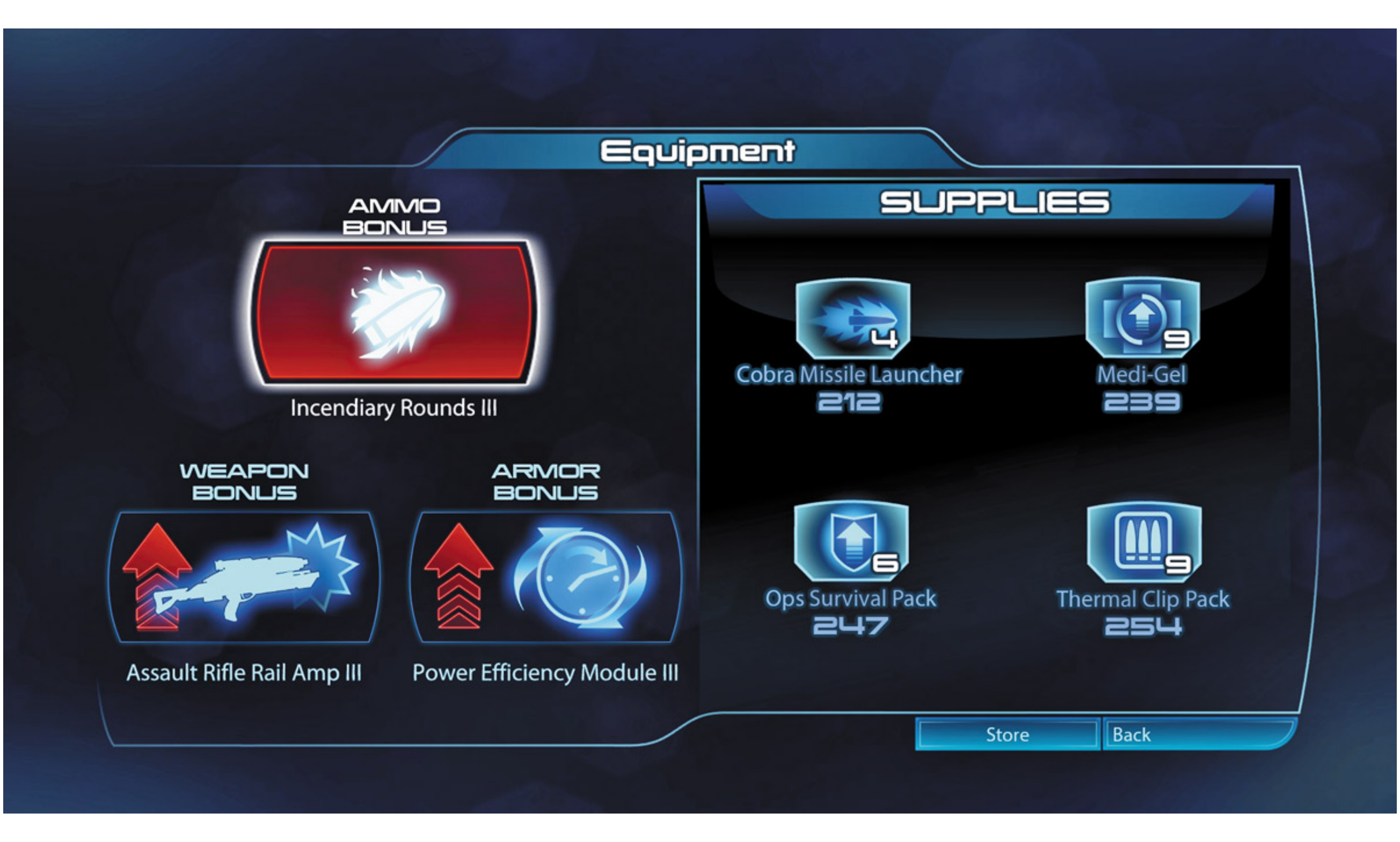
Appearance



Good looks don't count for much in the middle of a firefight, but personalizing your soldier can distinguish you from others on the squad.

You start with limited customization for each character as you unlock them, but purchases of Reinforcement Packs will sometimes grant you a Character Training item that will unlock new options over time.

Equipment



Arguably the dealmaker or dealbreaker, the extra equipment you bring to a mission is oftentimes the one advantage your team gets.

You have four types of consumables available for every squadmate you create.

Cobra Missile Launcher

A certain kill against just about anything it hits, combined with a wide area of effect, makes Cobra Missiles are one of the most effective weapons at your disposal.

When heavy units have you pinned down, a well-placed Cobra or two can blast a path to survival. Unfortunately, these take time to fire—time you may not have.

You need to charge the missile first before cutting it loose.

Try to coordinate with your squad when using one of these, or you could be wasting a shot you might desperately need during a later wave.

Ops Survival Pack

Consider the survival packs you can carry as your emergency buttons. Ops Survival Packs will restore your health and shields as long as you're still on your feet.

Once you go down, you must either resort to Medi-Gel, or hope that squadmates are close by to pick you back up.

Medi-Gel

When you are inevitably taken down, you have a few options. One is to wait for the enemy to execute you.

Another is to hope your squadmates can get to you in time to pull you up before you bleed out. And then there's Medi-Gel you activate for yourself.

You stand immediately where you were taken down, with the amount of health restored depending on what difficulty you're playing on.

You're quite vulnerable during this revival, as you do not have your shields, so pay attention to your surroundings.

There are also certain things you can't come back from.

Cerberus Phantoms and Atlases, for example, have instant-kill melee strikes that leave you out of the fight for the duration of the current wave.

Thermal Clip Pack

If you're paying attention, you'll see ammo crates strewn throughout each level, but inevitably, there will be times when you are cut off by overwhelming forces and can't simply run past the enemy to grab ammo.

You can use Thermal Clip in a pinch to restore your ammo including all of your grenades, saving you from having to break cover, saving you from having to break cover.

Note

You start out being able to carry two of these items apiece, but very rare reinforcement pack cards can boost your capacity up to ten!

Bonus Equipment

In addition to the four types of consumable items, through purchases at the store you also unlock Bonus Equipment that can enhance three major categories: Ammo, Armor, and Weapons.

These items are good for only one mission, so make the best use of what you equip!

Ammo Bonuses: These take the place of the Ammo Powers that Shepard and his allies use.

If you know what you're going up against, you can pick specific ammo types that best suit the scenario.

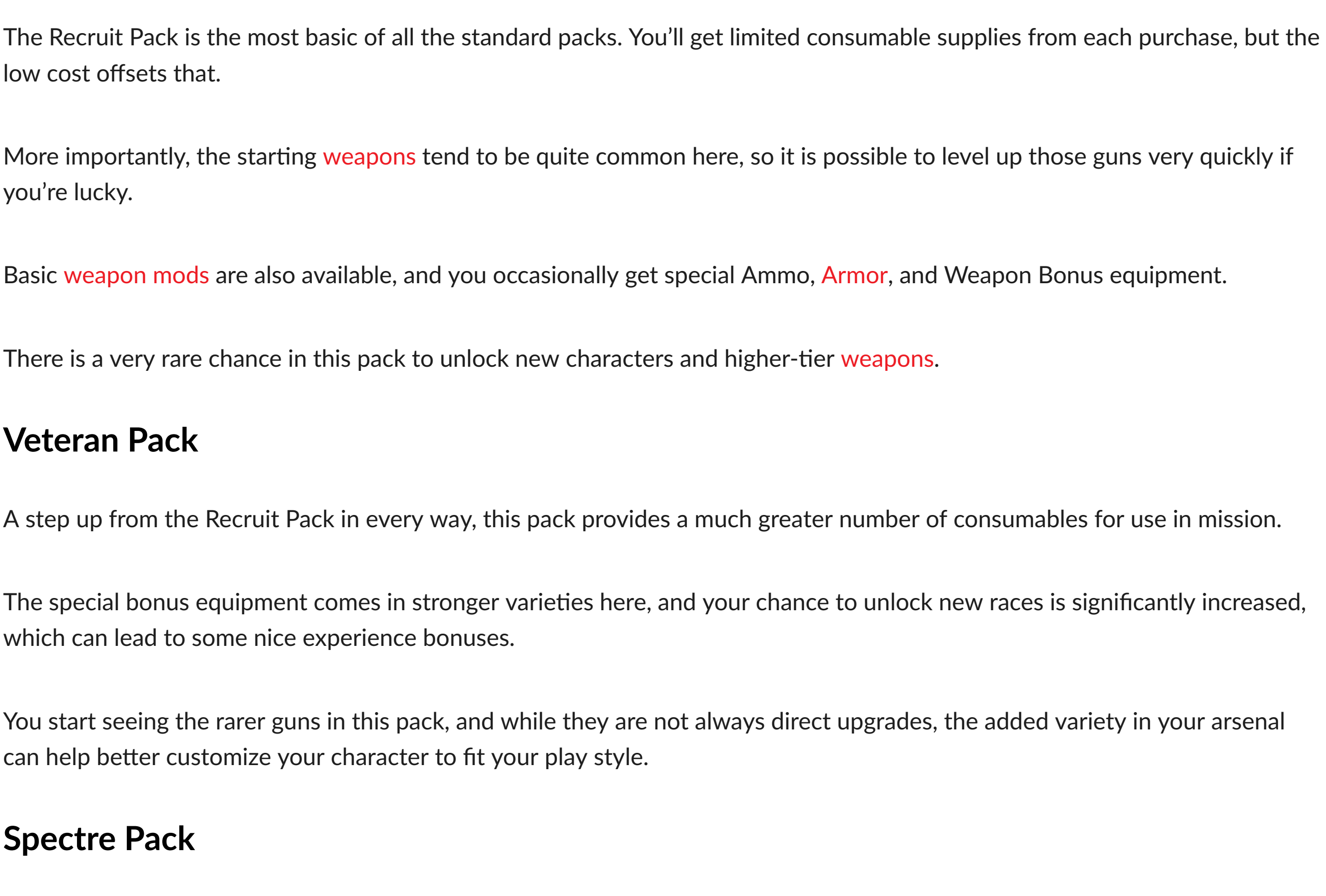
If you're playing against randomized opposition, even less-than-ideal Ammo Bonuses are better than no bonus at all.

Armor Bonuses: These can enhance your shields and your resilience to damage once your shields fail, and they can even improve the strength of your melee strikes.

Weapon Bonuses: These can improve the damage and accuracy of a specific gun. This is particularly useful for players packing a single firearm.

A good Weapon Bonus can boost the damage of a gun significantly.

The Store



50000 Credits
Or 160 BioWare Points

The best equipment for the galaxy's best.

5 random items or characters, including at least 1 rare or better.

The store is the most important part of your preparations, so it benefits players to accomplish the assignments in each mission and survive to be extracted from the battle zone in order to earn the most credits possible.

It contains three distinct reinforcement packages that provide consumable items for use mid-mission, new weapons and mods, special equipment for predeployment preparations, character unlocks, and experience bonuses.

Any time you unlock a weapon or character customization option, it becomes immediately usable, but if you get the same weapon or customization, you level up the weapon or gain experience for that character class.

Starter Pack

All players accessing Multiplayer for the first time receive a special Starter Pack that comes with basic supplies and a character unlock or an uncommon weapon. Consider this pack a taste of things to come.

Recruit Pack

The Recruit Pack is the most basic of all the standard packs. You'll get limited consumable supplies from each purchase, but the low cost offsets that.

More importantly, the starting weapons tend to be quite common here, so it is possible to level up those guns very quickly if you're lucky.

Basic weapon mods are also available, and you occasionally get special Ammo, Armor, and Weapon Bonus equipment.

There is a very rare chance in this pack to unlock new characters and higher-tier weapons.

Veteran Pack

A step up from the Recruit Pack in every way, this pack provides a much greater number of consumables for use in mission.

The special bonus equipment comes in stronger varieties here, and your chance to unlock new races is significantly increased, which can lead to some nice experience bonuses.

You start seeing the rarer guns in this pack, and while they are not always direct upgrades, the added variety in your arsenal can help better customize your character to fit your play style.

Spectre Pack

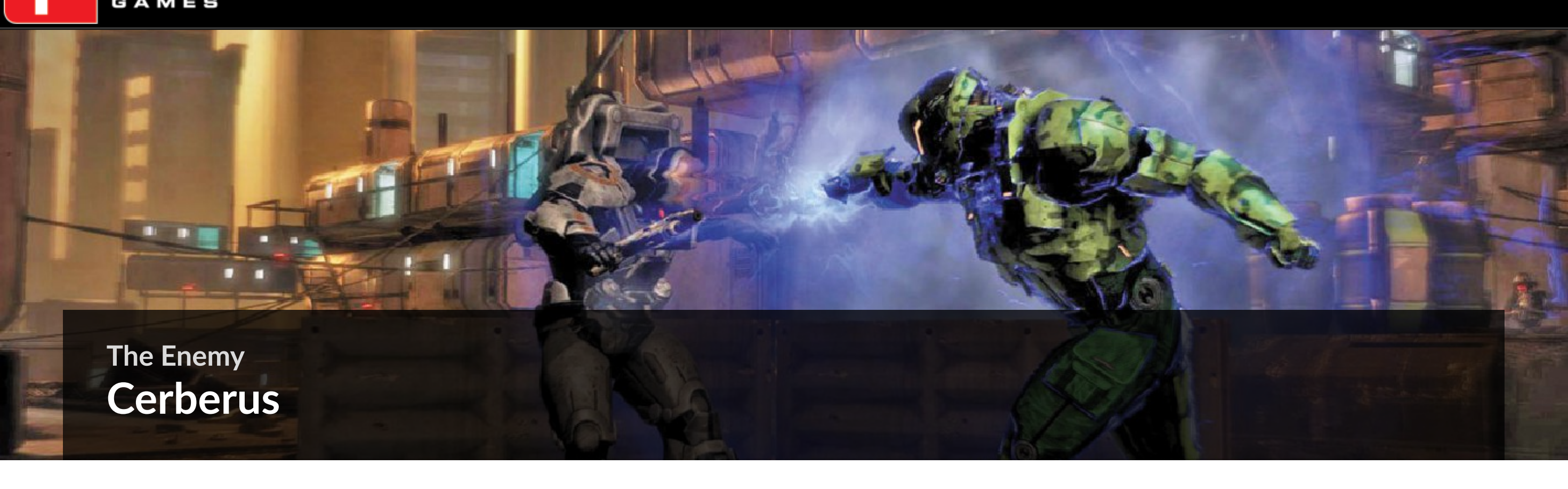
The big daddy of all the reinforcement packs—and for very good reason. Your chances of getting the rarest guns are highest here, including Spectre-issue gear found in the single-player campaign.

Weapon mods can easily be leveled up here, and the Bonus Equipment that you receive is often at the highest levels.

Character Unlocks and Appearance modifications have the greatest chance of appearing here.

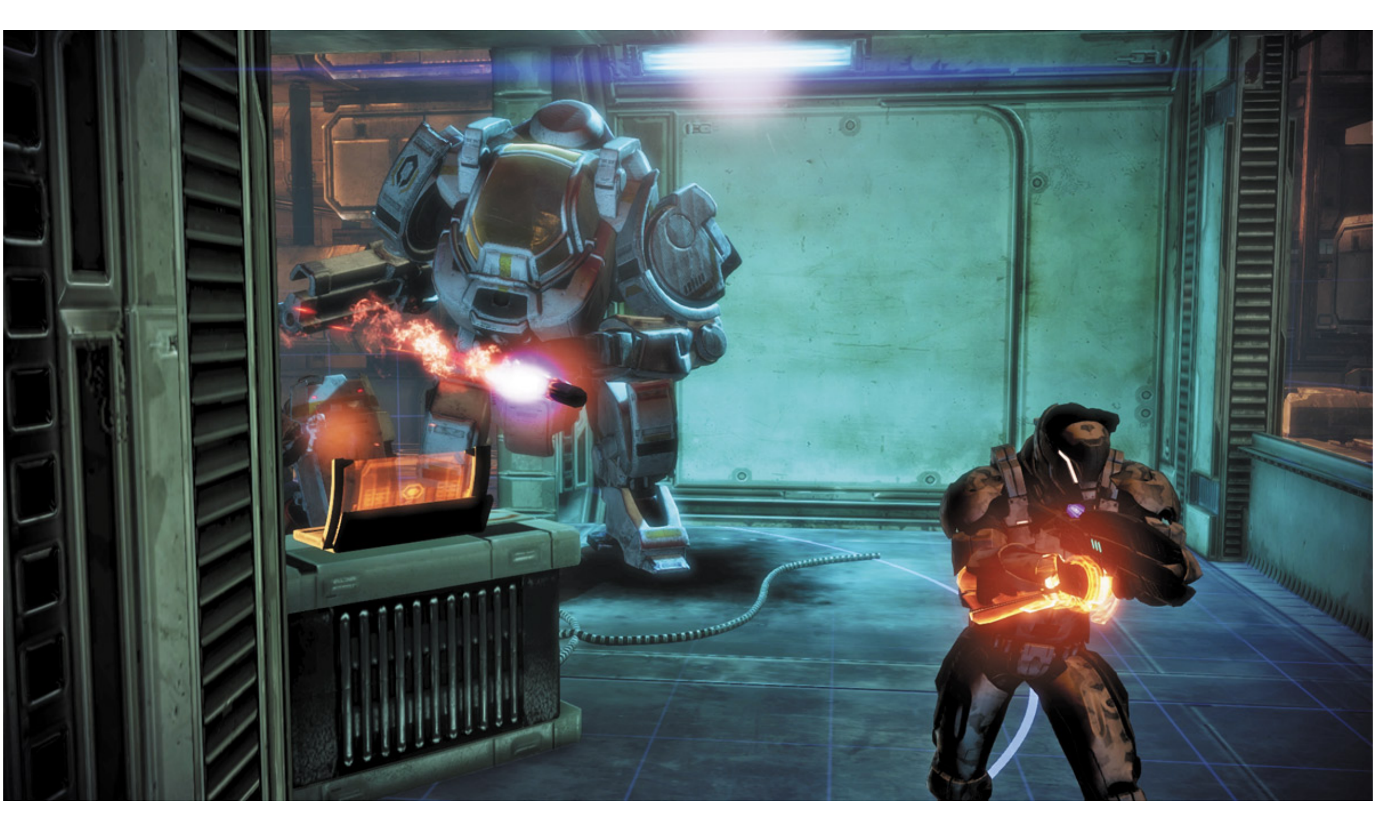
Note

Future promotions and additional packs may appear at the store, so pay attention to it even if you're not buying anything.



The Enemy

Cerberus



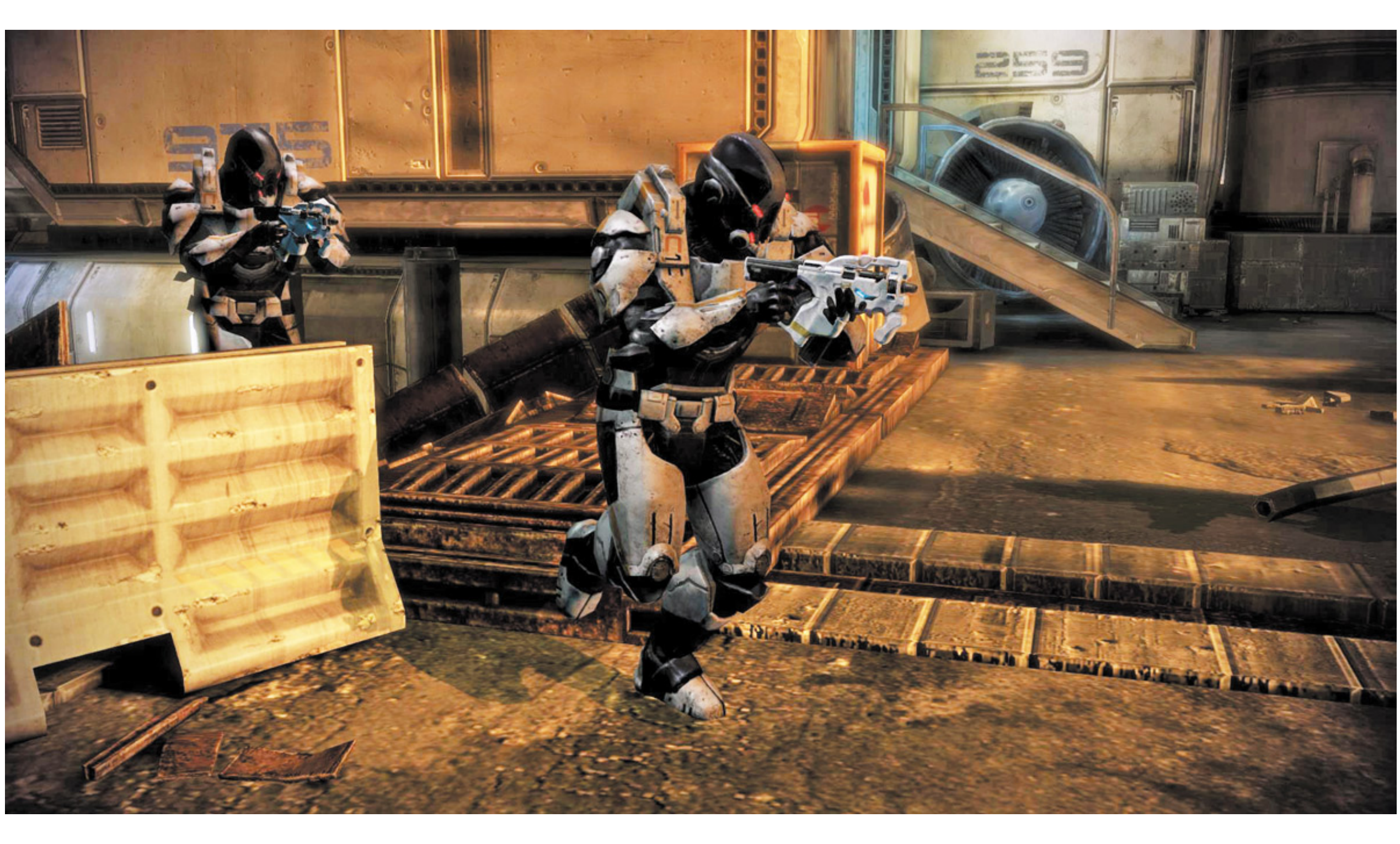
Of the three opposing forces, Cerberus is the most tactically minded.

Their soldiers act with some sense of self-preservation, moving from cover to cover, attempting to flank the players as much as possible, using the jump-jets on their suits to take up elevated positions on their victims.

They will use smoke and frag grenades to deceive and destroy careless players, while their stealthy Phantoms sneak past and kill the unsuspecting from behind.

Their Atlas heavy mech is slow but is also a massive gamechanger, able to stomp through all but the heaviest fire (or one or two well-placed Cobra missiles) while laying down withering cannon fire or dropping unshielded squadmates with homing rockets.

Assault Trooper



The most basic of all Cerberus infantry, Assault Troopers frequently use frag grenades to force stubborn players out of cover, and they coordinate their fire with other units.

They have decent footspeed, allowing them to flank a squad, or reach a downed player to execute them before help arrives.

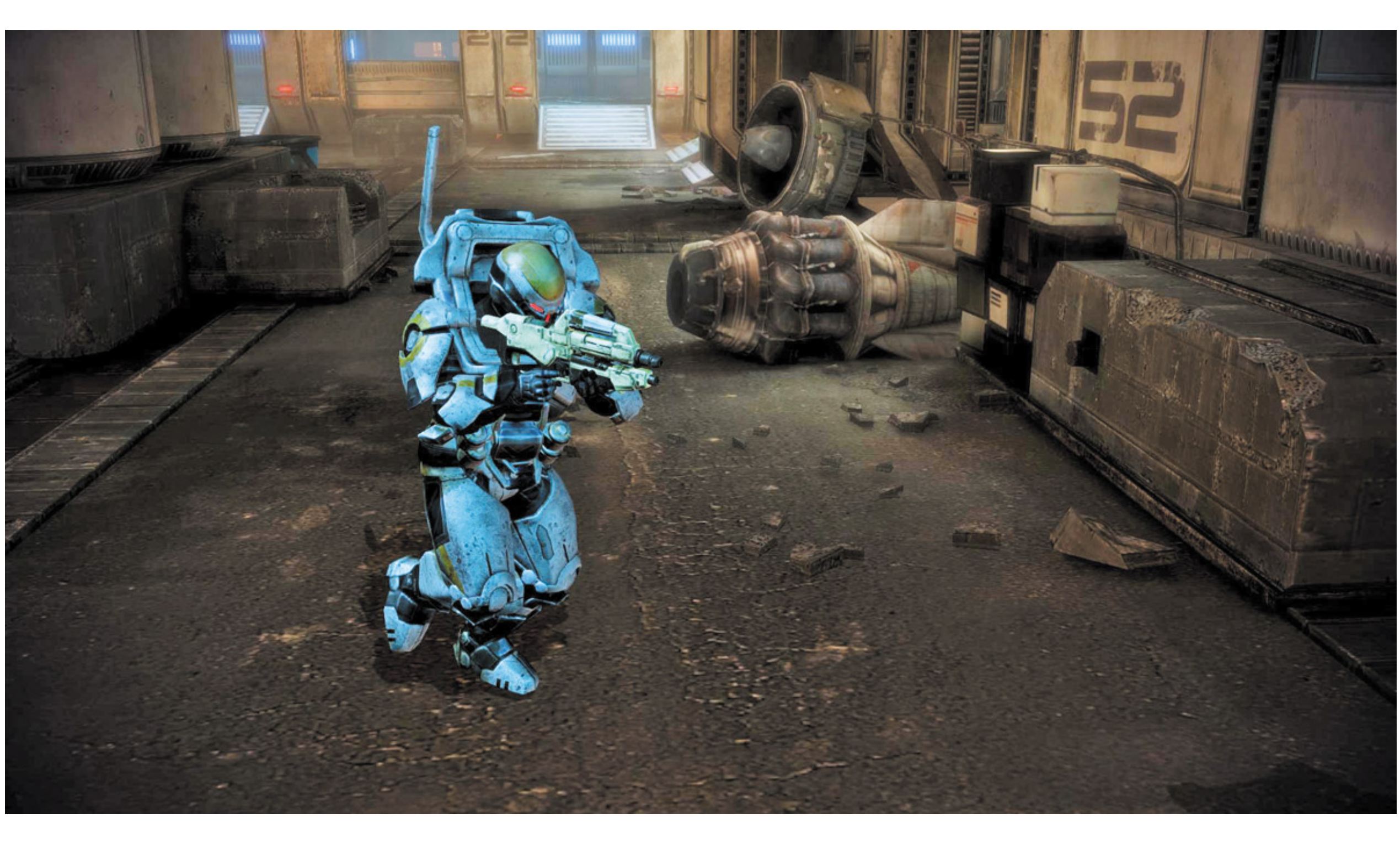
At range, the Assault Troopers make extensive use of the M-25 Hornet Submachine Gun, which can tear down shields and health with surprising speed.

Their biggest weakness is their lack of shielding, making them easy marks for any class.

Their lack of protection makes them especially vulnerable to Tech and Biotic combo explosions that can hurt or kill their fellows.

On higher difficulties, it's almost welcome to see these guys hanging out too close to more important units.

Centurion

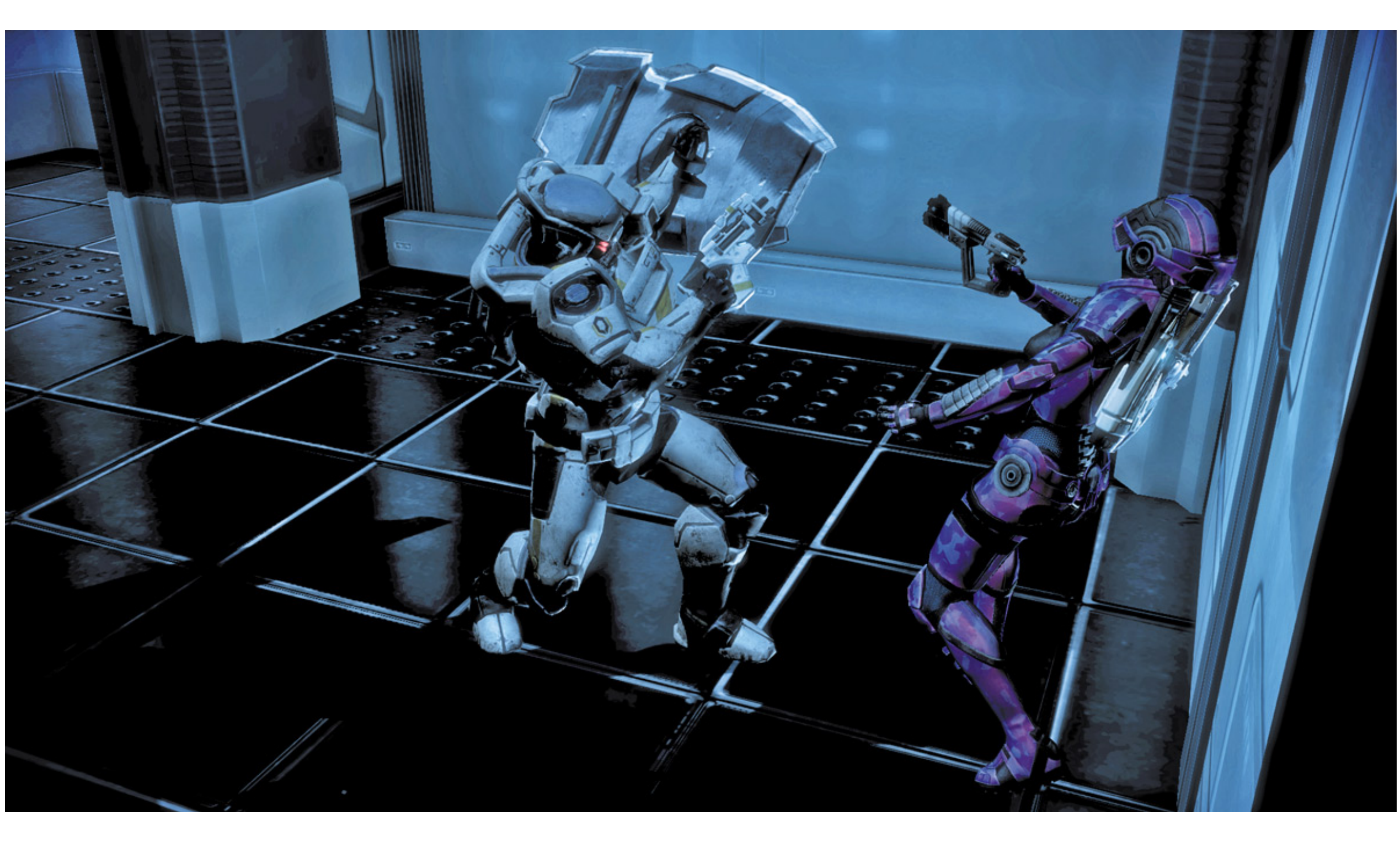


A step up in every regard from the Assault Trooper, Centurions come with kinetic shields and the dangerous M-96 Augmented Mattock Assault Rifle.

While their increased resilience and damage potential is an obvious threat, what makes them especially dangerous is their use of Smoke Grenades.

Centurions will often use these to hide the approach of other units, and unless you've got the mods or bonus equipment to target through the smoke, very unpleasant things could be sneaking around behind it without your knowledge.

Guardian



Guardians are essentially Assault Troopers with heavy ballistic shields.

Alone, annoying, but in pairs or more, Guardians can easily fluster and kill less disciplined players with their ability to soak up so much incoming fire.

Up close, Guardians use their shields as melee weapons, and during their slow march toward players, they fire powerful shots from their M-358 Talon Pistols.

Biotics with Pull or Singularity can remove their shields, allowing them to be taken down with greater ease.

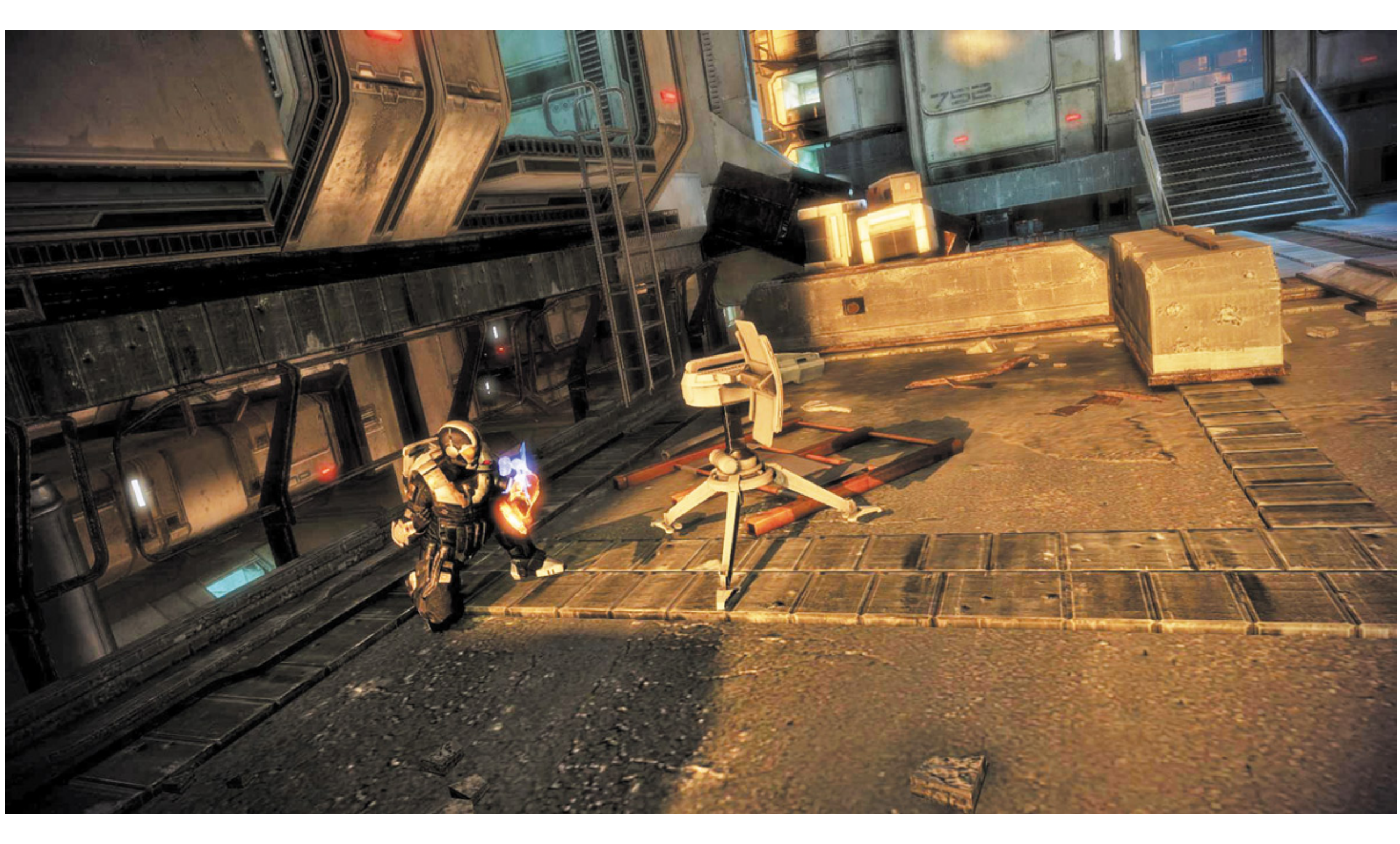
Skilled snipers can fire right through the view slit on the shields for headshots, but this can be rather difficult in spite of the slow speed at which Guardians travel.

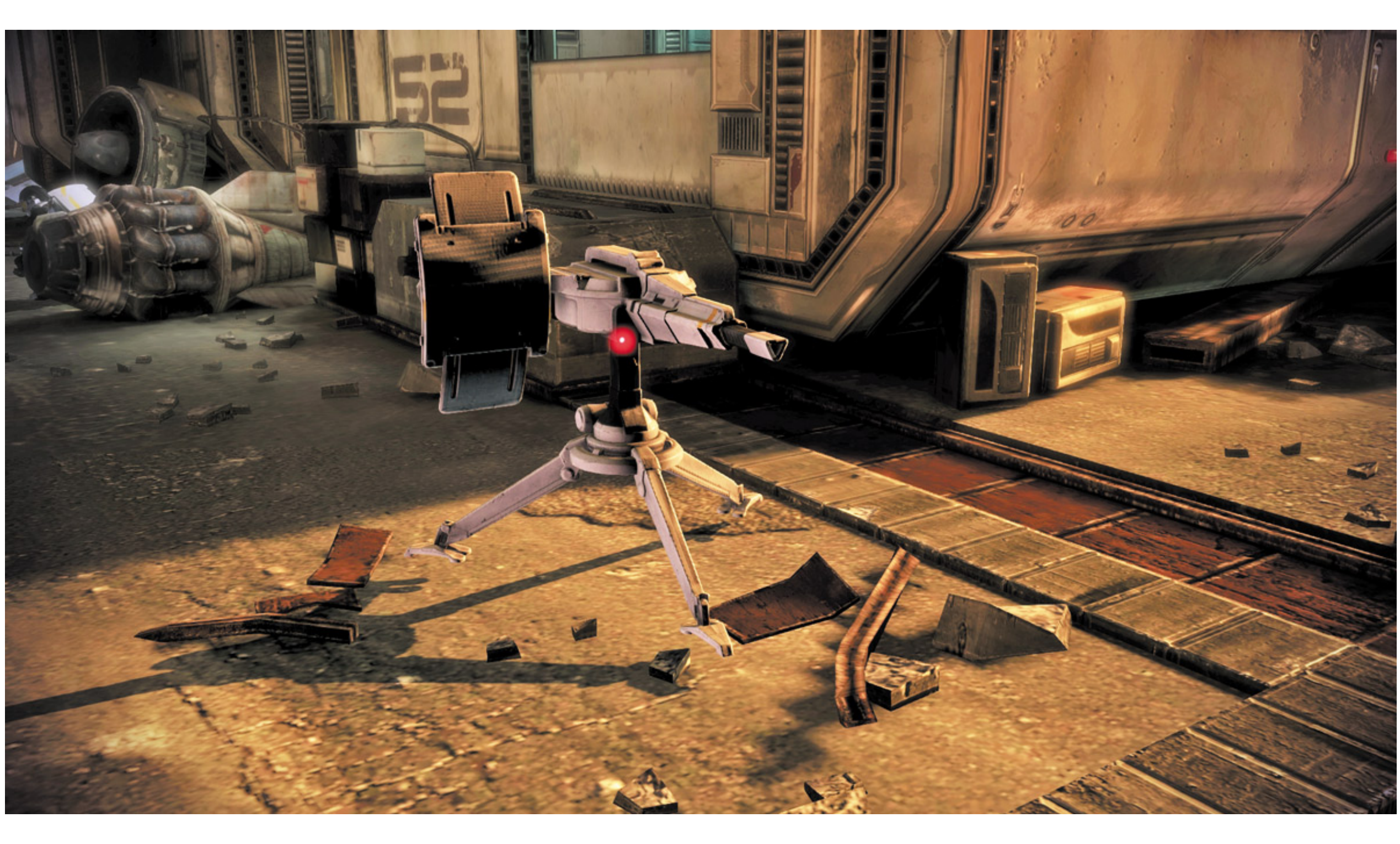
Armor Piercing Ammo, as well as guns with penetration mods, can allow you to shoot through their thin shields.

Powerful direct hits to the shield can also stagger a Guardian, leaving them more vulnerable to incoming fire from in front.

Squads can also coordinate flanking maneuvers on a Guardian to get at their exposed backs.

Combat Engineer and Turrets





Combat Engineers join the fray with kinetic shields and an M-5 Phalanx Pistol. What makes them really dangerous are the Sentry Turrets they can deploy.

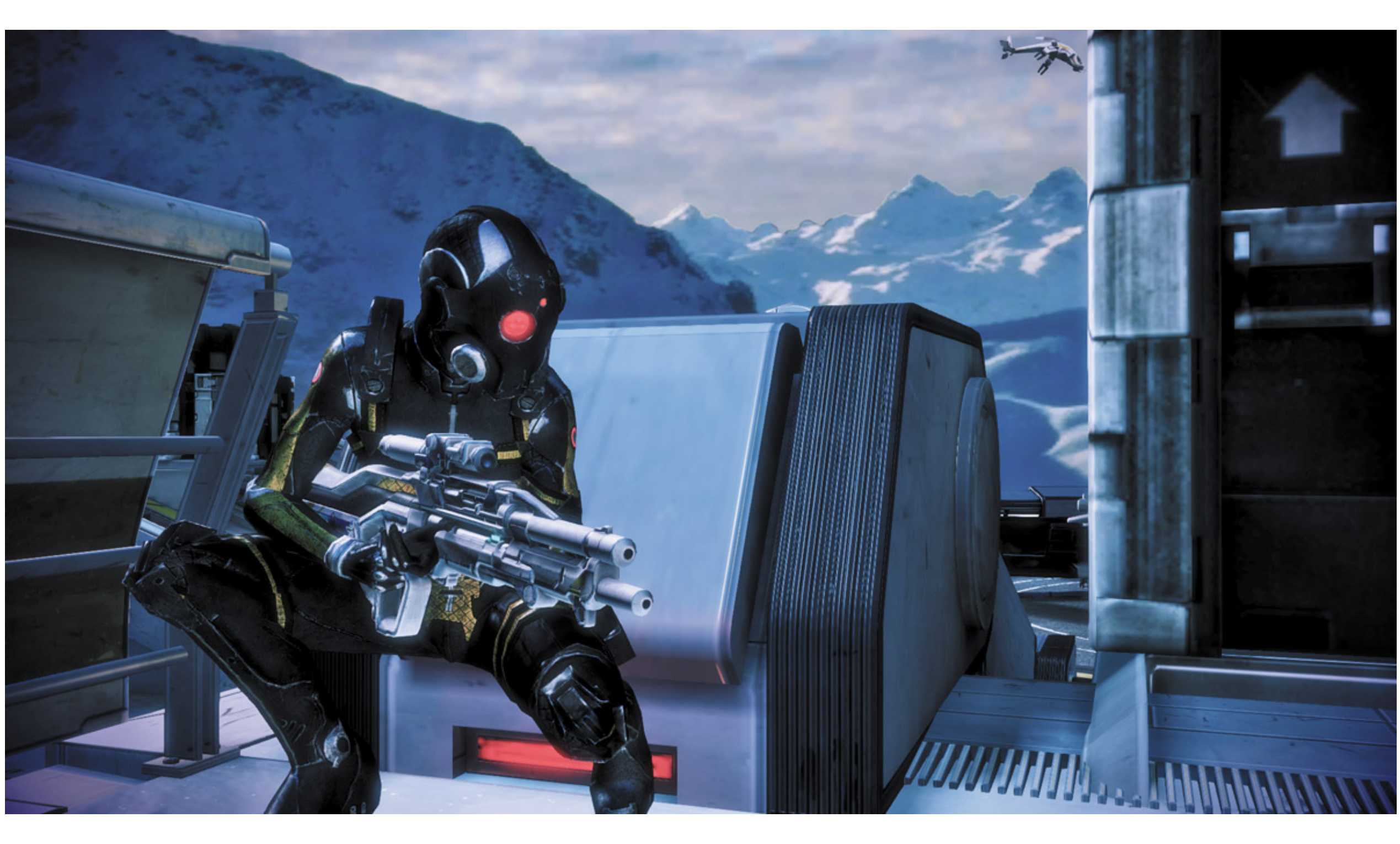
Turrets can lock down whole areas with their blistering fire, forcing players to stay in cover while trying to deal with it and the other Cerberus troops advancing under its protection.

As soon as you spot an Engineer, do not give it the opportunity to deploy a Turret. Worse still, Engineers will attempt to repair any active Turrets or Atlases in their vicinity.

It is possible to snipe the Turret on the back of a Combat Engineer with a high-powered sniper rifle before they deploy it for an instant kill—a goal to aim for.

Turrets can also be sabotaged with the right powers and turned on their masters.

Nemesis



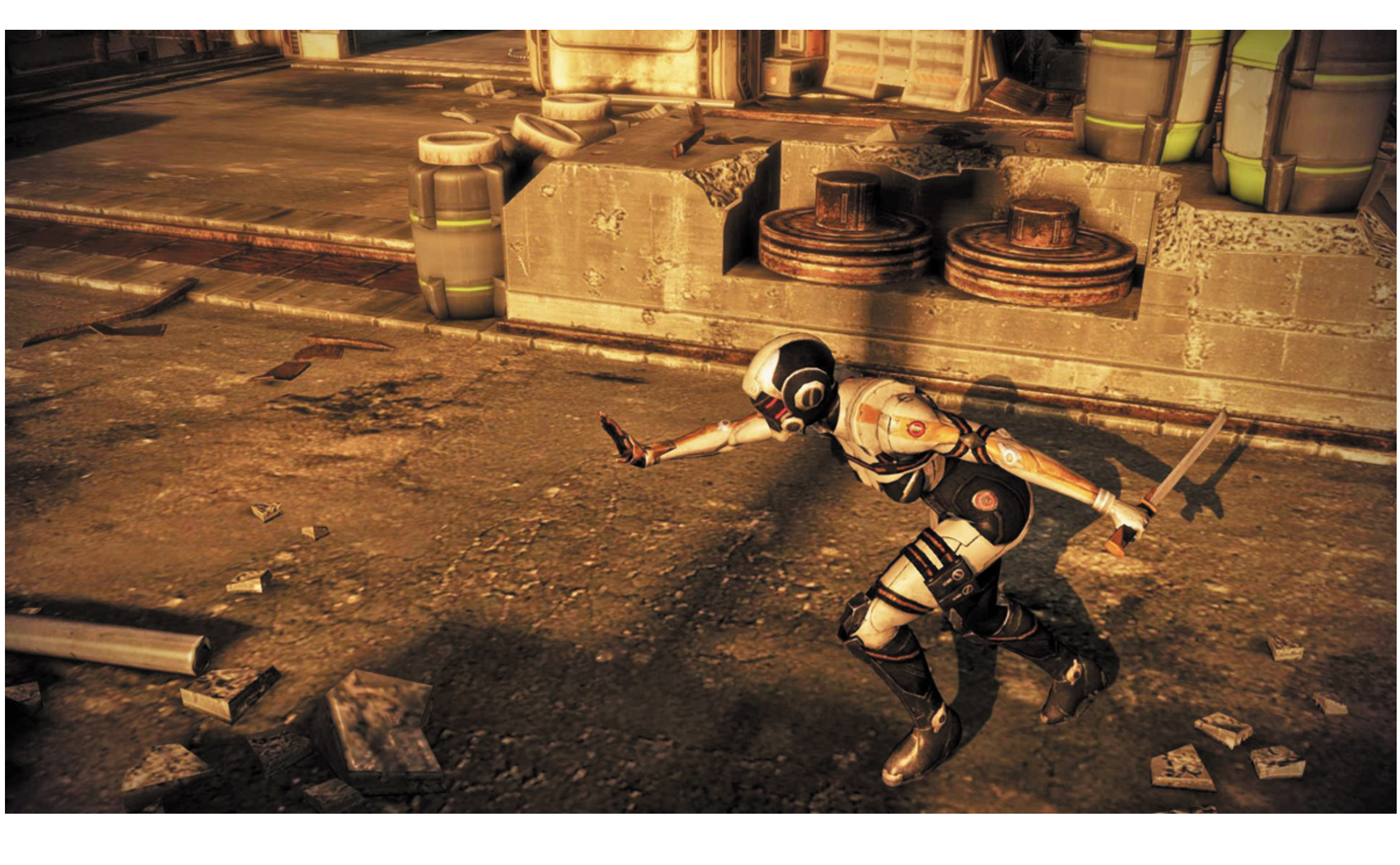
These ladies of long-range combat can drop an unassuming player from across entire maps with their M-13 Raptor Sniper Rifles, if they've got a line of sight on them.

They make a distinctive vocalization that lets you know they are on the field. However, despite their obvious lethality at range, they are far from the worst Cerberus has to offer.

If anything, they are almost like pests, running away when players draw near. In Assassination mode, their mobility and foot speed prove to be huge annoyances.

Cryo Blast can slow them down, even if they are shielded, and any teammate with that ability should tag a Nemesis with it.

Phantom



Phantoms are the assassins for Cerberus, and despite their lithe builds, they are among the deadliest foes you face.

They can instantly kill a player from in front or behind with their swords, they come with a powerful Biotic barrier for protection, they can absorb incoming Techs or Biotics with a wave of their hand, they are extremely agile, and on top of all this, they can cloak. Do not take Phantoms lightly under any circumstances.

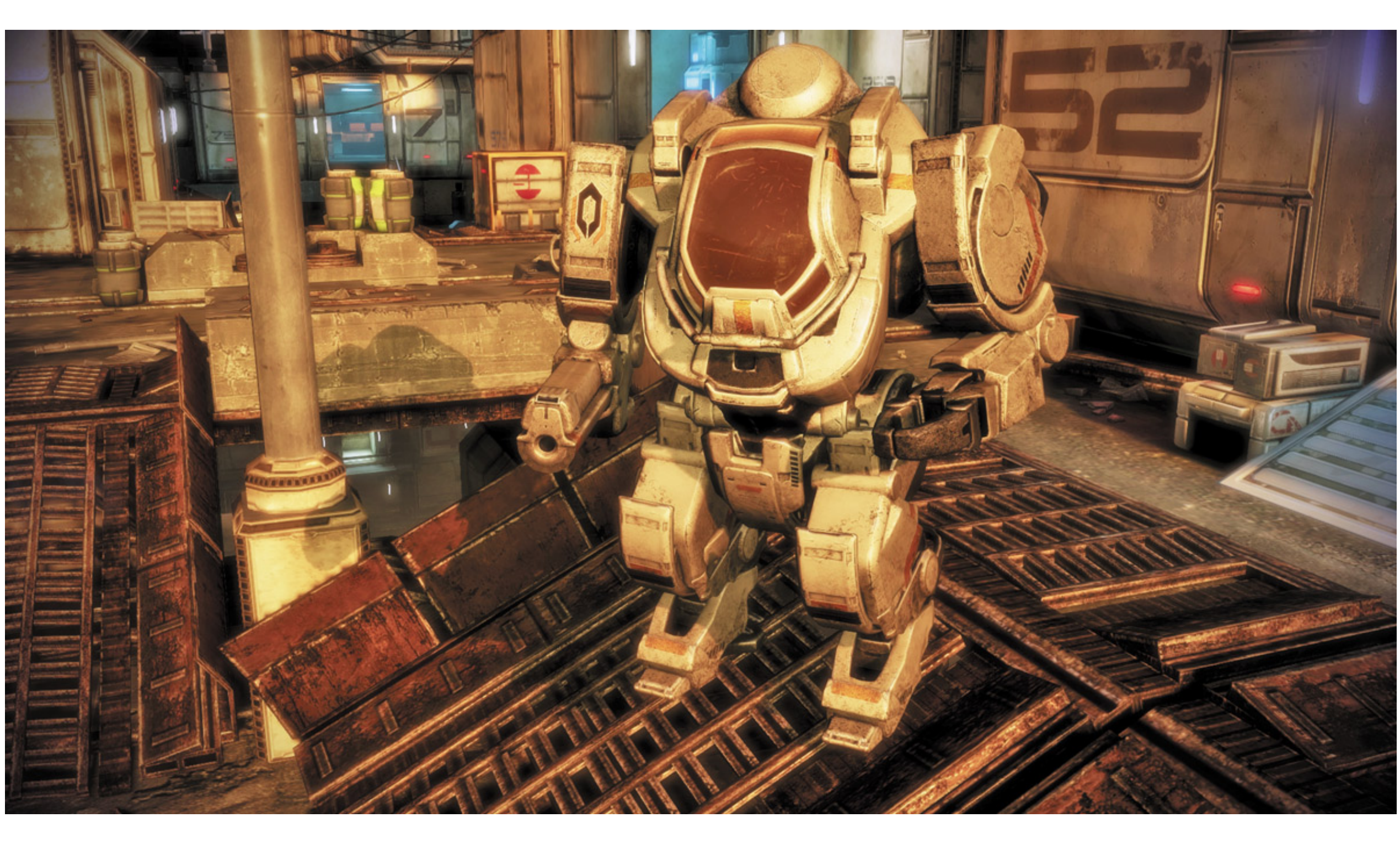
Do whatever it takes to stay outside of melee range with them unless you're approaching from behind or they are preoccupied with something else.

Even when their barrier is down, they can still use the sword to shrug off incoming fire.

Get that away from them by shooting it when it isn't at the ready, but good luck doing that when the Phantoms are moving.

Like the Nemesis, a Phantom has a distinct vocalization that lets you know when one, or several, are on the prowl.

Atlas



The largest thing Cerberus will send your way in multiplayer is the Atlas heavy mech. Unlike ones found in single-player, these cannot be hijacked.

They retain their high-damage cannon, homing missiles, and incredible resistance to incoming fire. If there's anything that deserves a Cobra rocket, it's these guys.

Despite their size and slow speed, Atlases can find their way into places you would not expect to see them, taking up whole passageways with their girth.

Getting close to one is also a bad idea, as in addition to their standard melee swipes, they do have an instant-kill grab and smash move.

Shots directly to the cockpit do more damage, but that typically also means you're inside its firing arcs. A safer target would be the thrusters on its back.